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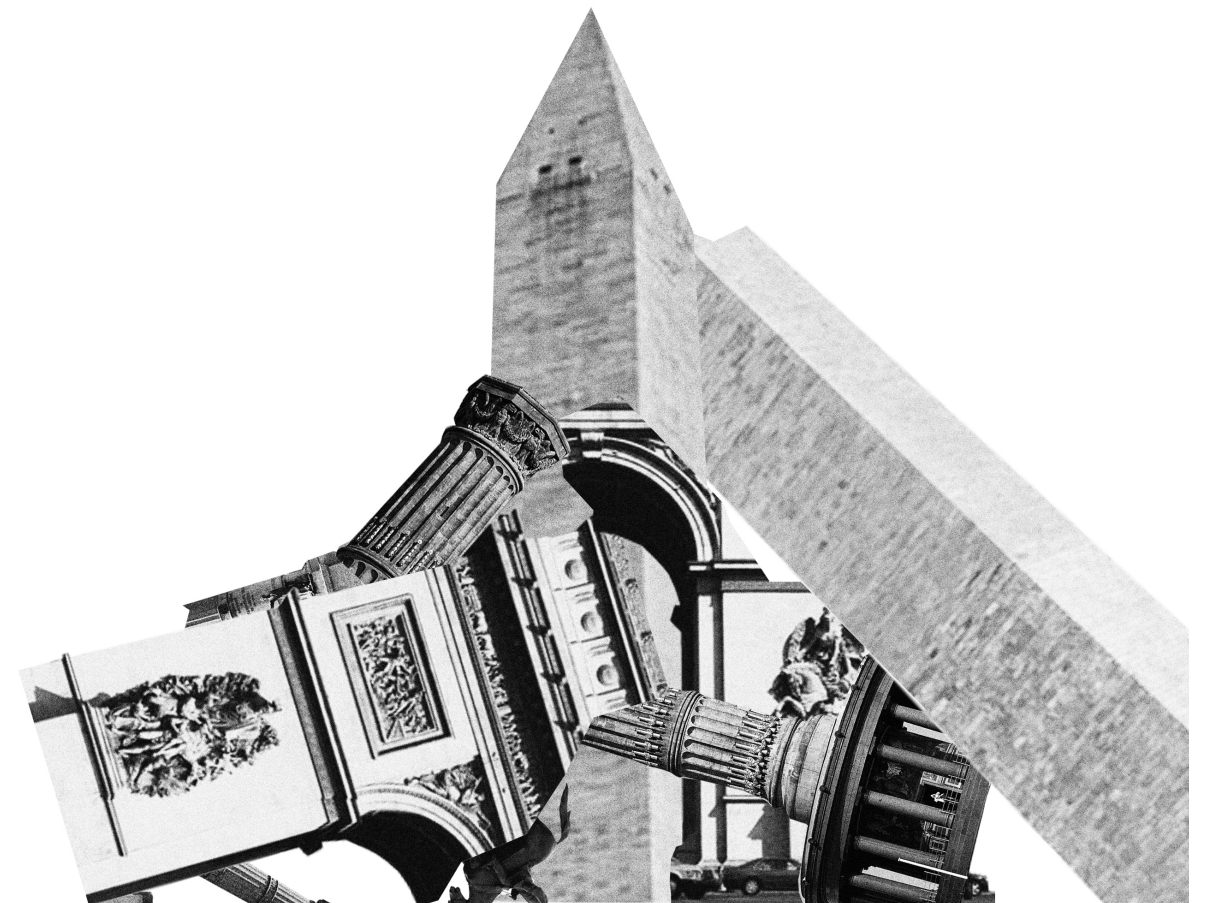
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Living Memories

Rethinking Remembrance

*Timothy Mulhall
Syracuse University School of Architecture
Undergraduate Thesis 2020
Advisory Group: Terms and Conditions
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*"We cannot simply propose monuments and memorials that will remain as stable,
fixed monoliths"
--Krzysztof Wodiczko*

Memories are lived, not lost. The memorial cannot exist as a distant, finished product of the past. The past is always remembered, learned from, and lived within the present. Why do we as architects continue to treat it as if it is over and done with?

"The present and the past coexist, but the past shouldn't be in flashback"
--Alain Resnais

This thesis will interrogate conventional types and methods of memorialization, challenging the memorial as a complete product. Developing from inquiries into alternative acts of commemoration, this investigation will seek to conceive a memorial in the making. An ever-changing memorial that embraces temporality and the process of becoming will offer a new way of rendering remembrance in the built environment.

Memorial Catalog 8-43

Spatial Language 44-55

Site Conditions 56-65

Materials 66-71

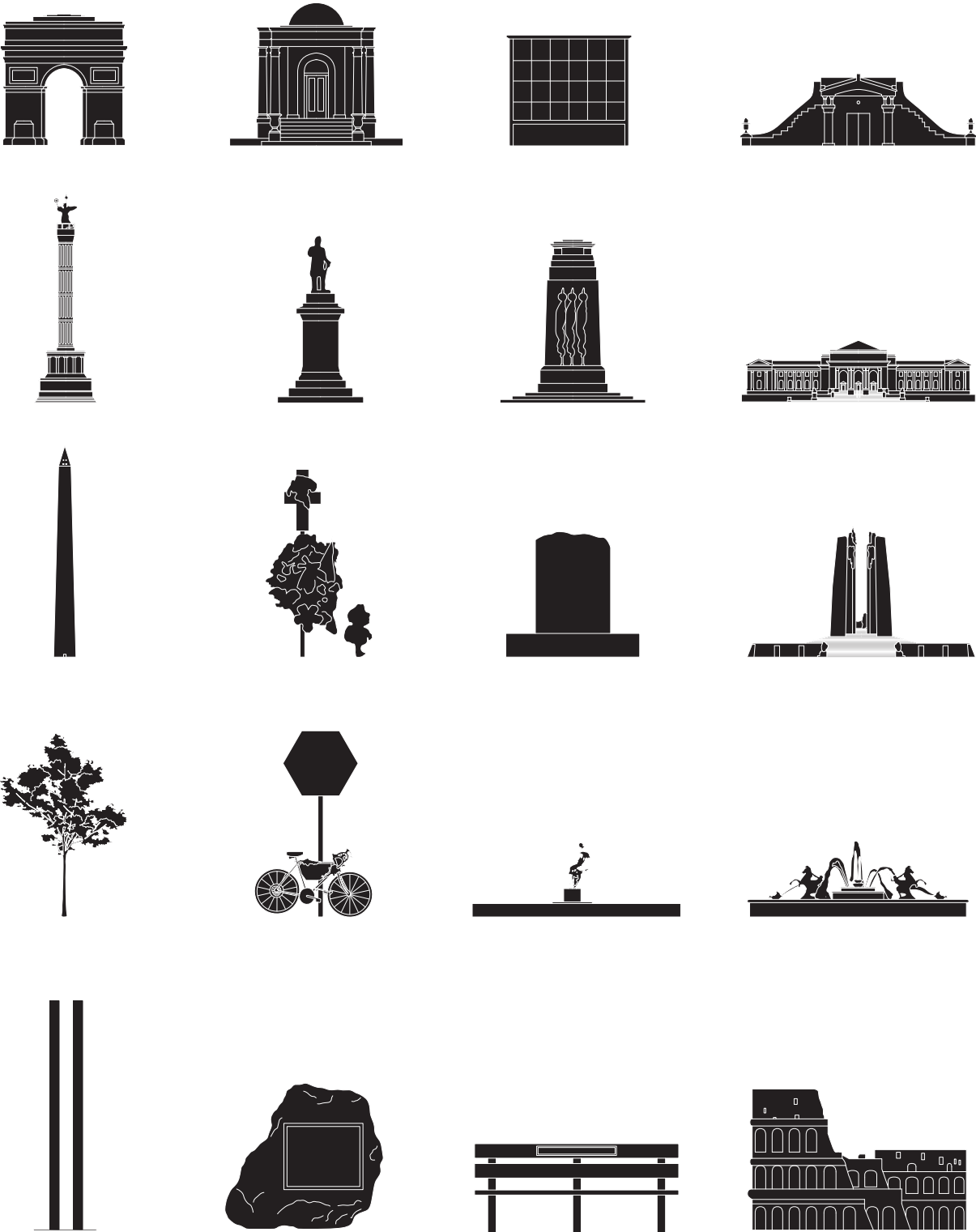
Alternative Insights 72-87

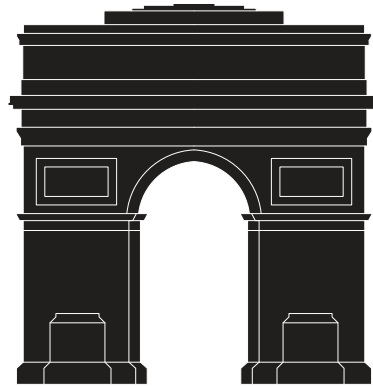
Interviews 88-99

Bibliography 100-103

Memorial Catalog

The act of remembrance is often reliant on objects. These objects can be buildings, symbols, urban markers, sculptures, living things, or even constitute a collection or archive. However, all of these objects are dependent on conditions of display, performance, and ritual. For example, a cenotaph and a roadside memorial exist in two distinct environments. A cenotaph can be placed in a park, it can exist at an intersection in an urban plan, or it can be placed in a cemetery. The roadside memorial is constructed on the side of a road, a highway, and sometimes also might be found in an urban context. Yet, for both the interest is in who will see them, how to make them most visible, and how people understand them. Both act as markers (indicating death without the presence of a body), and can serve as warnings (of the dangers of war and of the dangers of the road). However, the big distinction is in how they are constructed. The roadside memorial consists of multiple objects democratically placed to appropriate a given space. The cenotaph, on the other hand is a project funded and endorsed by governments. The roadside memorial is subject to decay and relies on collective maintenance (if deemed essential) whereas the cenotaph becomes part of a city project. Thus, these two examples indicate similarities and conditions exhibited in all the objects. They also raise questions of engagement and interaction. How can/do people relate to memorials? Who gets to play a role in memorializing? Also the “meaning” of objects is difficult to pin down. Associations are highly subjective especially when it comes to memory, posing a challenge for the memorial as a single object.





1. The Arch (*Arc de Triomphe*)

The arch often acts as a feature of memorials or as a stand alone object. The memorial arch serve as symbols of commemoration for prominent historical figures and wars. When used to memorialize wars they can often act as triumphal arches, emphasizing celebration and victory. However, both typically are gates or entrances for passage through. In some cases, they will create a public space around them such as Paris' Arc de Triomphe and Munich's Siegestor. These two are both prominent objects/ markers in the urban fabric and dictate the organization of streets roads. The arch as memorial/ monument can be directly linked to imperial Rome where the triumphal arch was used to celebrate specific generals and wars. One contemporary use of the arch is the Gateway Arch in St. Louis, Missouri. Designed by Eero Saarinen as a monument to westward expansion, it suggests how this particular symbol relates to power and spectacle.



Siegestor (Munich, Germany), Gateway Arch (Missouri, USA), National Memorial Arch (Pennsylvania, USA), Arch of Remembrance (Leicester, England)

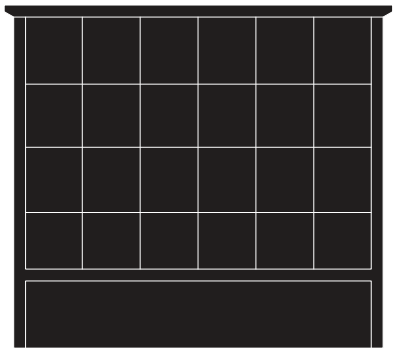


2. Mausoleum (*Wilbert Lewis Smith*)

A mausoleum is a free-standing building intended to house a tomb of multiple tombs. It acts as a memorial to the deceased contained inside and is often located within a cemetery or on private land. The use of mausoleums as a simultaneous act of burial and memorialization dates back to 350 BC. King Mausolus' entombment in the Mausoleum at Halicarnassus is the first known use of the Mausoleum. Historically, prominent figures used mausoleums to display their power and wealth. Now, they are used by families as a way to preserve and commemorate memories of their loved ones (however, they still require a large financial investment). There are several types of mausoleums such as: indoor (shared, indoor crypt), garden/ outdoor (shared, outdoor crypt), and private (indoor or outdoor crypt). There are single crypts, side-by-side crypts, end-to-end crypts and family crypts.



Indoor, shared (Boca Raton), Garden, shared (Lakewood Cemetery), Indoor, private (Oakwood Cemetery)

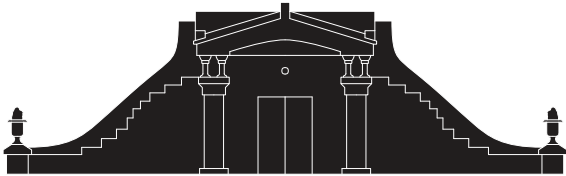


3. Columbarium (*Brewster Cemetery*)

A columbarium is a wall, room, or building with shelves/ storage for urns. The use of the columbarium dates back to Rome (the Columbarium of Pomponius Hylas is an example). The shelving wall is the primary feature of the columbarium meaning that its expression is quite flexible. It can be above ground or below ground, free standing or attached to/ within another building. When it is treated as a free standing wall it is generally placed within a gathering space and is in dialogue with other columbarium walls. When it is placed in the interior of a building (often a mausoleum) it can constitute the room itself (acting as four walls of shelving) or as a series of shelves. Typically each of the niches in the wall is marked by a plaque with information pertaining to the deceased. In both cases it operates as a shelving/ organizational strategy that enables friends and family to visit and remember the deceased.



Columbarium wall in Byron Cemetery, Cedar Columbarium in Swan Point Cemetery, Arlington National Cemetery Columbarium, Chapel of the Chimes in Oakland

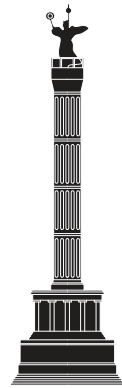


4. Receiving Vault (*Abraham Lincoln*)

Receiving vaults were generally designed as temporary storage for the deceased when the ground was too frozen too dig or if the body is being transported elsewhere. In most cases, the receiving vault also acted as a makeshift memorial where the body could be visited and the deceased commemorated until a final location was decided upon. As a result, they are primarily found within cemeteries and burial grounds. They were common during the 1800s-1900s but are now generally obsolete due to new technologies that allow more flexible burial seasons. Typically, the vaults were underground chambers dug into or embedded in hills. Sometimes the vault was dug into the earth and a mound was built over it to imitate a hill. Receiving vaults for famous historical figures such as Abraham Lincoln have now become permanent memorials to those individuals.



Park Cemetery Receiving Vault, Marion Cemetery Vault, Abraham Lincoln Receiving Vault in Oakridge Cemetery



5. The Column (*Berlin Victory Column*)

Much like the arch, the column can form a dominant feature in a memorial or act as a free-standing object. If it is free-standing it can serve as a commemorative symbol for an individual or event. In the urban fabric, it is most common to see the “triumphal” or “victory” column which is more typical in monuments. When acting as a monument, it often stands at the cross/ intersection of streets and roads, forming a public space around its base. However, at a smaller scale one will often see the column as a marker for a deceased individual in a cemetery. In both cases the column is usually placed on a pedestal. It is also commonly featured within a group/ collection of columns. The use of the column as a memorial object dates as far back as the Byzantine Empire (Hippodrome of Constantinople) and was frequently used in Ancient Rome (Trajan’s Column). Its use is likely connected to its “sacred” order, class connotations, and relation to both nature and the human body.



Commemorative Columns (NY, USA), National Capitol Columns (Washington D.C, USA), Trajan's Column (Rome, Italy), Monument to the Great Fire (London, England)

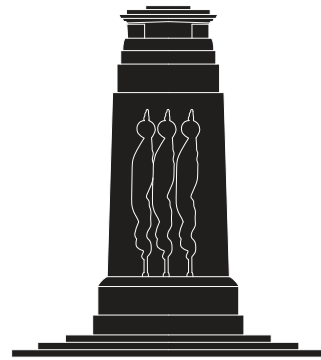


6. Figure Statue (*Dick Dowling Memorial*)

The figure-statue is one of the most explicit ways of memorializing an individual or group of individuals. The U.S. is currently littered with statues depicting confederate soldiers and other figures of wars. However, the subjects depicted are incredibly diverse ranging from religious iconography to famous artists, scholars, etc. The memorial statue dates deep into prehistory and was used in different empires/ civilizations to celebrate deceased leaders. The figure of the statue is typically placed on a plinth or base that raises it off the ground and further removes it from human scale. It is seen in various locations including: parks, urban centers, and cemeteries. Most often it is placed in extremely public locations, but it can also find its way into the private realm through reproduction/ miniatures that might be placed on a shelf or play a role in a personal shrine. In either case, the “meaning” of the memorial is derived from the depiction of the commemorated individual.



Statue of Unity (Gujarat, India), U.S. Marine Corps War Memorial (Virginia, USA), Dr. Jose Rizal National Monument (Manila, Philippines), Robert E. Lee (Virginia, USA)

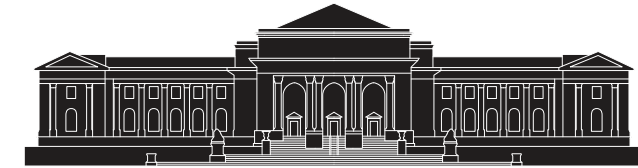


7. Cenotaph (*White Hall London*)

The term cenotaph is derived from the Greek *kentoaphion*, meaning “empty tomb”. The derivation is appropriate as cenotaphs are memorials, often in the form of a tomb, that acts as commemorative markers to deceased individuals buried elsewhere. They are also used to remember those whose bodies were not recovered or were somehow lost. Their use as memorials dates back to ancient civilizations like Greece and Egypt. They are primarily used today as a method to commemorate wars and individuals killed during wars. Thus, they generally become national memorials and monuments. They are frequently placed on a base or small plinth to separate the object from the ground and are primarily located in public space (parks, churches, civil buildings). Their expression is generally monolithic and abstract but can sometimes feature statues.

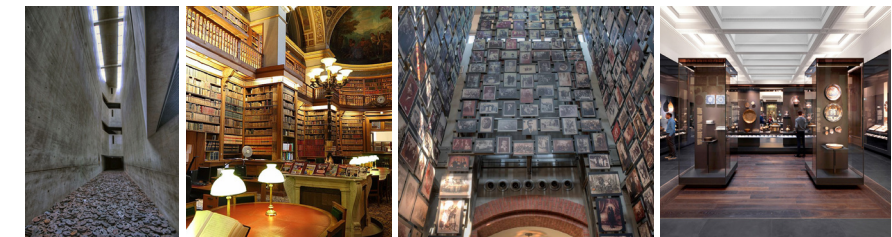


Bruce Park Cenotaph (Winnipeg, Manitoba), Alamo Memorial (San Antonio, Texas), Glorious Dead Cenotaph (Kolkata, India)



8. Library/ Museum (*New York Public Library*)

Libraries and museums often function as memorials dedicated to remember specific moments in history through the collection and display of object, books, information in general. They act as archives of evidence, expanding organizational systems dedicated to acquiring sorting, exhibiting various mementos and recordings of individuals and events. Museums can also operate as memorial-museums. Daniel Libeskind’s Jewish Museum is one example. In Libeskind’s design, the emphasis is on the spatial qualities of memorialization (i.e. remembrance through sequence, material, light) rather than on the objects housed inside the museum. Yet, the strength of the objects typically found inside a museum is that they often serve as highly personal, variable, and yet literal documentation. They can also be cross referenced and establish different levels of dialogue through relational arrangements. But, perhaps most significant is their constant growth and development through collection.



Jewish Museum (Berlin, Germany), Palais Bourbon Library (Paris, France), Holocaust Memorial Museum (Washington D.C. USA), British Museum (London, UK)

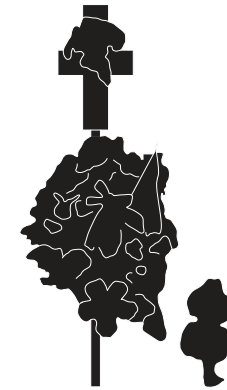


9. The Obelisk (*Washington Monument*)

The obelisk was used in Ancient Egypt to mark the entrances of temples and as free standing elements dedicated to deities. Many were actually re-erected in public spaces (piazzas, in front of churches) during Ancient Roman times, while others were commissioned in the same style. Obelisks were also erected as monuments to the king in the Assyrian civilization. Generally, they are placed on pedestals and act as centerpieces of major urban spaces. Much of their potency is derived from their monolithic quality and monumental scale. Although Egyptian obelisks were carved from a single piece of stone, most contemporary examples are built piece by piece. The Washington Monument is the best known “modern obelisk”. The public space which surrounds it is vast and it is visible from a great distance. As a result, it is often the site of protest, rallies, and demonstrations. However, it is best known and recognized as a result of tourism. They are also often used as markers in cemeteries.



Washington Monument (Washington D.C., USA), Obelisk of Theodosius (Istanbul, Turkey), Grave Marker (NY, USA), Wellington Monument (Somerset UK)

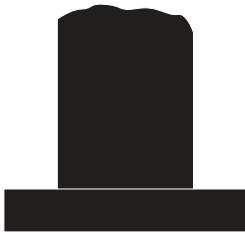


10. Roadside/ Collective Memorial (*Jackson Country*)

The “grassroots” memorial was first seen in the 1980s. The roadside memorial appears on the side of the road following an automobile related death. It develops out of a necessity for the mourners to materially express their grief and to commemorate the deceased. It marks the site of death and acts as a warning of the dangers of the road. The collective memorial operates in a similar way, but is usually conceived of on a more urban site. It can be connected to multiple individuals or an event, whereas the roadside memorial is dedicated to a single individual. They are also a way for a community to express their grievances within a system and to demand social change. We see this now with memorials dedicated to George Floyd emerging as a means of remembering the individual, as well as protesting the cause of his death. Both memorials consist of common items such as flowers, stuffed animals, notes, and mementos. They are impermanent and constantly changing.



Michael Brown Memorial, Roadside Memorial to an Unknown Individual, Memorial on the Site of George Floyd's Killing in Minneapolis

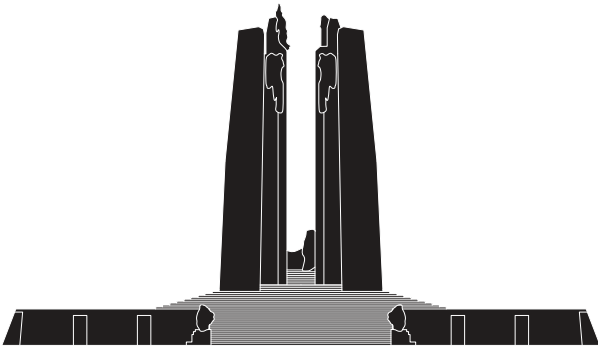


11. Tombstone

The tombstone (or stele) is a common method for memorializing the deceased after burial. Their use dates back to ancient civilization, but the tombstone as we understand it today most likely developed in the 17th century. Primarily located in cemeteries, they are typically associated with religious acts or beliefs. Contemporary tombstones are placed over the grave (ether at the head or the foot) and are inscribed with the deceased’s name, date of birth, and date of death. Some also have a personal message, prayer, or symbolic funerary art. The stone can either be embedded in the ground or erected vertically--the shapes and material often vary. They offer a defined, permanent location for mourners to visit and remember the deceased. Oftentimes, they will place personal mementos, flowers, and photographs in front of the stone. This suggests the need to participate in a ritual and physically interact with the memorial. It may also help them to distinguish from the vast field of similar tombstones.



Different tombstones and decorative elements in Oakwood Cemetery (Syracuse, NY).



12. The Megalith (*Vimy Memorial*)

The megalith has been utilized in memorials since pre-historic times. It is seen in many different civilizations and locations. Stonehenge, for example, is believed to have been a burial ground. The megalith relies primarily on its scale, monolithic quality/ weight, and its impressive verticality to establish its role as a monument or memorial. As a commemorative expression, its abstract nature allows it to be flexible deployed in relation to a variety of events or individuals. It is now most often used to commemorate a prominent historical figure, a war, or a tragic event. The megalith can be a feature of a memorial, it can be decorated with statues and inscriptions, or it can operate as a free-standing object. It is generally placed in, or demarcates some form of public space at its base and is highly visible. Due to its impressive appearance, megalithic memorials tend to become tourist sites and are replicated through imagery and social media.



Triangle Megalith of Valle Levante (Fonachelli-Fantina, Italy), Vimy Memorial (Givenchy-en-Gohelle, France), MLK Memorial (Washington D.C., USA)

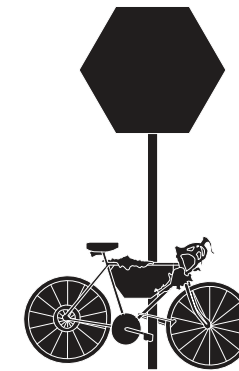


13. Memorial Tree

The memorial tree is a “living memorial” in the most literal sense. Some draw nutrients from the cremated remains of the deceased suggesting the continuation of life, while others act as more of a symbol. In either case, the power of the memorial tree exists in the contrast between its lifespan and the “end” of the commemorated individual’s life. There is an overlap between memorial trees and gardens in the sense that both can assist in the mourning process through their constantly changing state. Since both continue to live and change, the way that one visits and revisits memories will also continue to change with each encounter with the memorial. The choice of location is typically indicative of the interests and habits of the deceased. They are generally planted in places that they enjoyed visiting or places that suggest a hobby or activity that was important to them. In addition, the species of tree selected can also be symbolic.

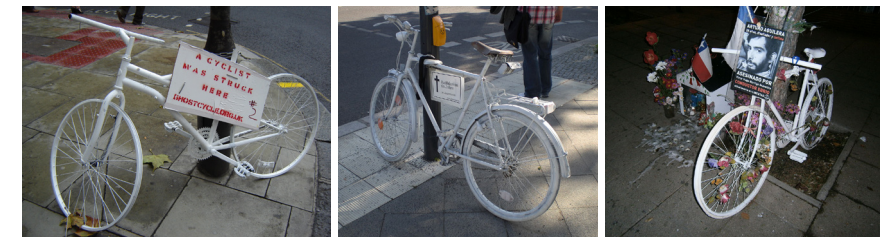


Memorial trees in different locations and periods of life (Amazon.com order), Carlyle Lake (Illinois), Oakhill Cemetery (Washington D.C.), Grosse Ile Track (Michigan)



14. Ghost Bike (Minneapolis)

The ghost bike is a relatively new variation of the “grassroots memorial”. Since 2003, communities have utilized the white bike as a means of marking the location of an automotive-related death. Much like the roadside memorial, the ghost bike’s performance deals with grief, warning, and protest. The placement of the memorial within the urban environment allows for frequent, chance interactions with pedestrians. Its visibility is an integral part of its conception--it exists as a marker, a warning of the dangers of the road. It reconciles grief through its activism. By placing the bike in a specific location and decorating it in a particular way the affected community expresses a sentiment of regret and outrage that the individual passed as a result of carelessness on the part of the driver and often the urban planner. Generally, they aim to invoke changes in policy and infrastructure that will help make the urban environment safer for cyclists.



Ghost bikes in London (England), Berlin (Germany), and Chile



15. Eternal Flame (JFK)

The “eternal flame” is a flame that is said to be inextinguishable. As such, it suggests that the deceased will live on through memory. It is used to commemorate both specific historical figures and events (particularly wars). It is often placed in a remote or removed location, forming the center of a space dedicated primarily to its observation. The flame is typically emphasized and centered on a base, plinth, or circular boundary. One cannot touch the flame, but can view it in the round. It is treated as sacred, the idea that it burns indefinitely develops from the spirituality of “miracles”. However, the “sacred” tends to give way to “spectacle” as tourists flood the site in amazement. For example, JFK’s memorial received thousands of visitors within the first day of its opening. This leads to questions of whether individuals were visiting out of respect to JFK, to see the flame, or a combination of both. One can also question whether that really matters if a memory persists through tourism.



WWII Memorial (Nizhny Novgorod, Russia), WWII Memorial (Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina), JFK Memorial (Virginia, USA)

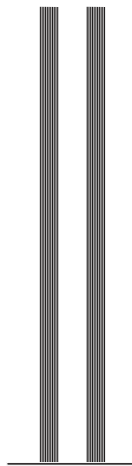


16. Fountain/ Water Feature (J.C. Nichols)

Water frequently figures into the design of memorials. It can often be a feature in the design or a central aspect of it. Part of its use can be attributed to its “beauty”, while another reason might pertain more to its calming effect. Fountains or memorials within the urban fabric tend to use water more as an aesthetic condition, due to their high visibility. While memorials that are more removed or concerned with creating a specific phenomenological condition rely on the psychological effects of running water. Since there are so many ways to design for it; water, fountains, streams are used in a variety of contexts. All conditions of running water are employed, interchangeably, to commemorate specific individuals and events. Regardless, water features are generally visual. In all cases of use, the water is not to be touched or “dirtied” by visitors. The common attitude is that entering the water of a fountain is somehow disgraceful or otherwise disrespectful.

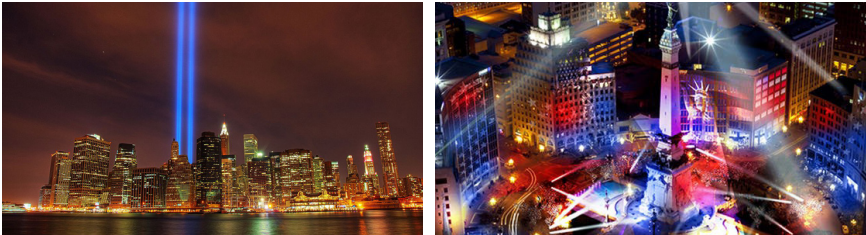


Depew Memorial Fountain (Indiana, USA), National 9/11 Memorial (NYC, USA), Jellico Memorial Fountain (London, England)

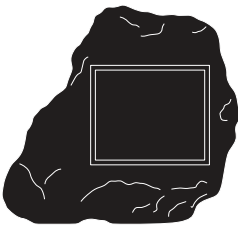


17. Light (9/11 Tribute)

Light in memorials can operate in a number of ways serving as either the memorial itself or as a way of revising an existing memorial. For example, the 9/11 tribute uses light as a memorial. Two powerful beams are directed into the sky, symbolizing the two towers and creating a staggering visual effect. The light, although it is ephemeral and highly temporal acts as an object. It is widely circulated on the Internet and through social media, allowing individuals to see it globally. The other method of memorializing through light is by using it as a tool for revision. The Soldiers and Sailors Monument is transformed into a spectacle when covered in overtly “American” colored lights. Krzysztof Wodiczko’s projections alter the “meaning” of monuments to create something more democratic, that stands in contrast to its existing state. The use of light is quite new and continues to be developed further.

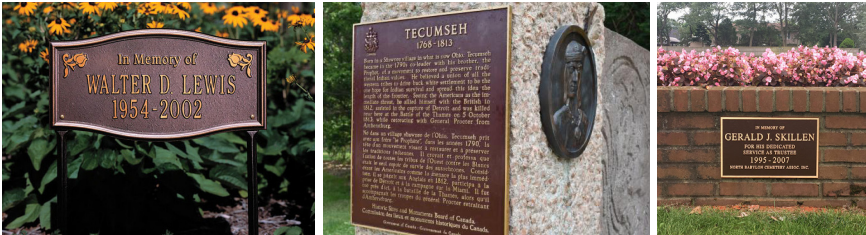


9/11 Tribute in Light 2010 (NYC, USA), Soldiers and Sailors Monument 2018 (Indiana, USA)

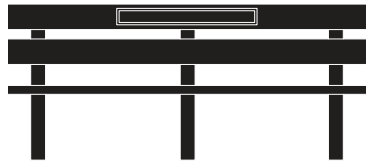


18. Plaque

The plaque is a common way to commemorate an individual or event. Typically, the plaque is engraved, embossed, inscribed, etc. with information pertaining to the subject of memorialization. Plaques are frequently used in a number of different memorials as a way of expressing specific details or facts that might not be readily apparent. Thus, they can be integrated into a wall, a sculpture or act as a free-standing object. In all situations, their placement transforms the object into a memorial. A rock, bench, or brick wall becomes an object of commemoration when a dedicative plaque is placed on it, at its base, or near it. Plaques have existed nearly as long as the written language and so are one of the oldest methods of memorialization. However, beyond an auxiliary function, plaques do little to offer respite for mourners, and illustrate very little about the subject of commemoration.



Plaque as sign, plaque on object, plaque on wall

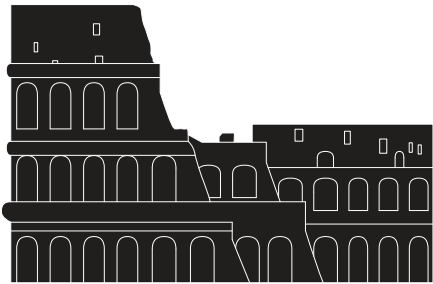


19. Commemorative Object/ Donation

The commemorative object or donation relies heavily on plaques to identify as memorials. However, once a plaque is placed on the object it becomes a way of remembering specific attributes of the deceased. For example, a bench placed in an individual's favorite park becomes a symbol of that person's personality and interests. It also offers both a location and a material object for mourners to visit. The donated object operates in a similar way. Yet, the donation is inherently tied to its function. Because it serves a purpose, the memory of the deceased can live on through interactions with that object. The commemorative object and donation are placed in public spaces to achieve greater visibility and engagement with people. In both cases, the object can commemorate individuals and events but due to the specificity of its location and purpose tend to be more related to a single person.



Memorial bench, commemorative flag pole, memorial picnic table



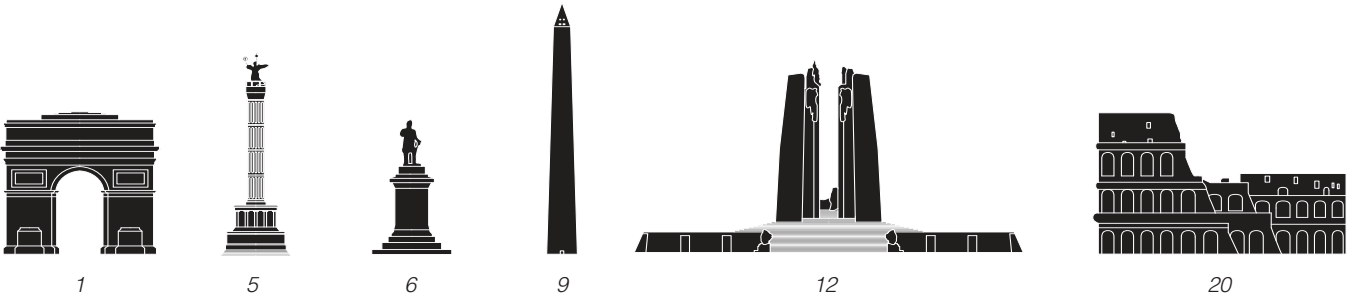
20. The Ruin (*Colosseum*)

Leaving a building or artifact in a ruined state is a very deliberate and frequently challenged decision. The ruin can serve as evidence of a traumatic event--such as the Hiroshima Atomic Bomb Dome and the Berlin Wall Memorial. It can communicate an experience through its destruction and individuals' engagement with it. The ruin also allows for a profoundly complex relationship with time. When one enters or views a ruin, they are able to both see and feel the passing of time through its physical decay. In all instances, there is the sense that something has been lost, that something has happened, that one should care about these things because of the state of decay which has consumed the ruin. The ruin becomes an object through its quality as an image. They are often tourist sites, to be photographed, to be understood as "ruin porn". In this way they become objects of consumption that are highly aestheticized.

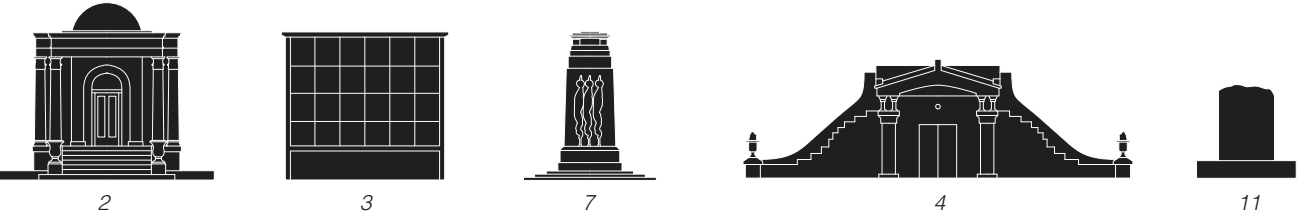


"Once Upon Awakening" (Kabul, Afghanistan), Hiroshima Atomic Bomb Dome (Hiroshima, Japan), Berlin Wall Memorial (Berlin, Germany)

Monuments



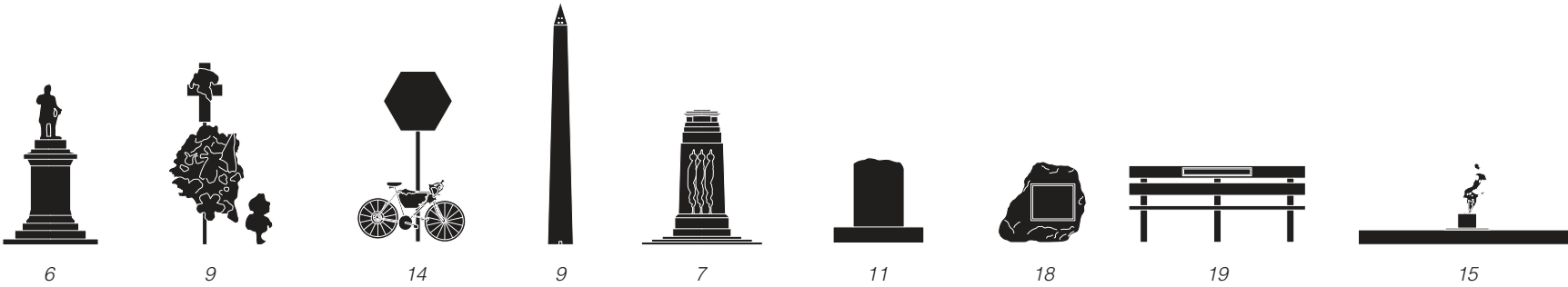
Funerary



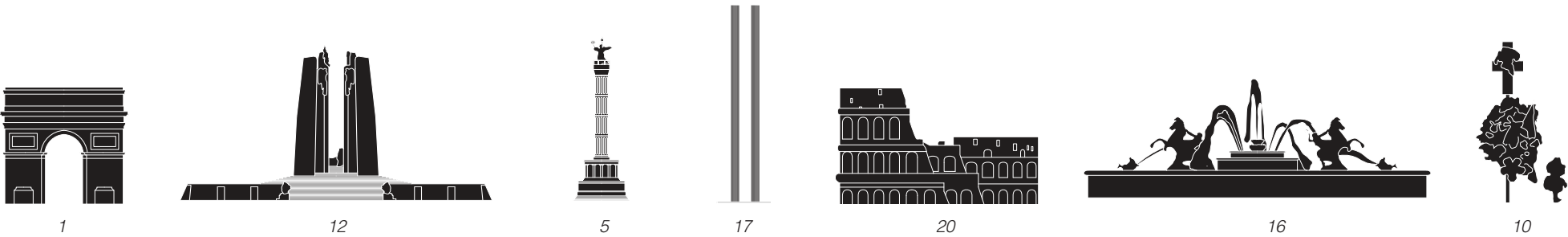
Temporal/ Indeterminate



Solitary Individual



Collective Event

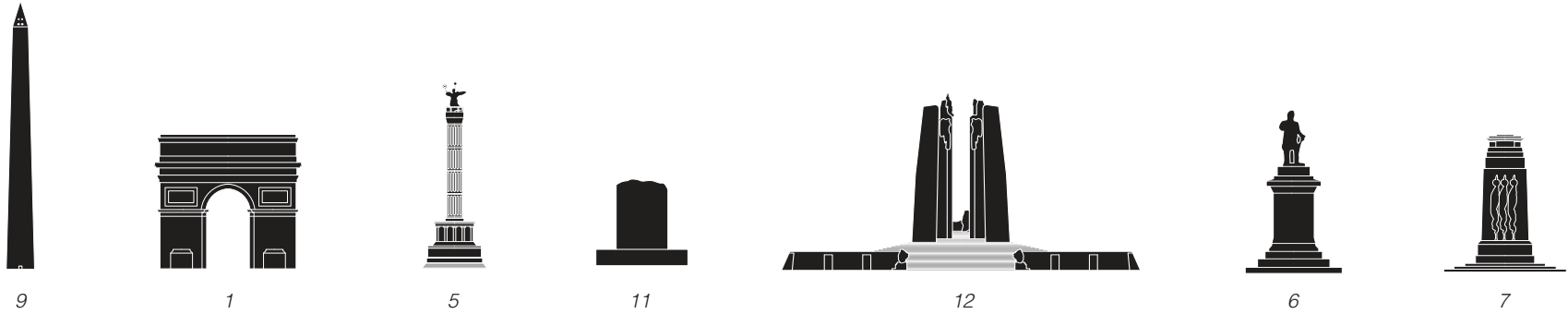


1. Arch 2. Mausoleum 3. Columbarium 4. Receiving Vault 5. Column 6. Statue 7. Cenotaph 8. Library/ Museum 9. Monolith 10. Roadside/ Collective Memorial 11. Gravestone 12. Megalith 13. Tree 14. Ghost Bike 15. Flame 16. Fountain 17. Light 18. Plaque 19. Commemorative Object 20. Ruin

Categories

Living Memories: Rethinking Remembrance

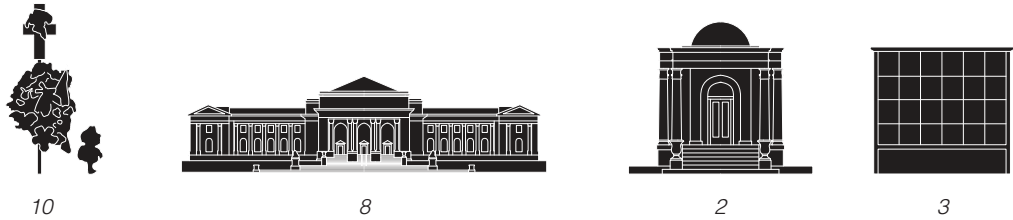
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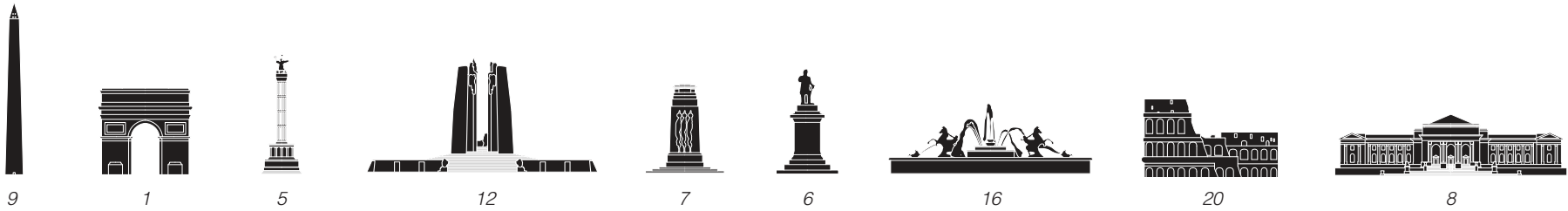
Urban



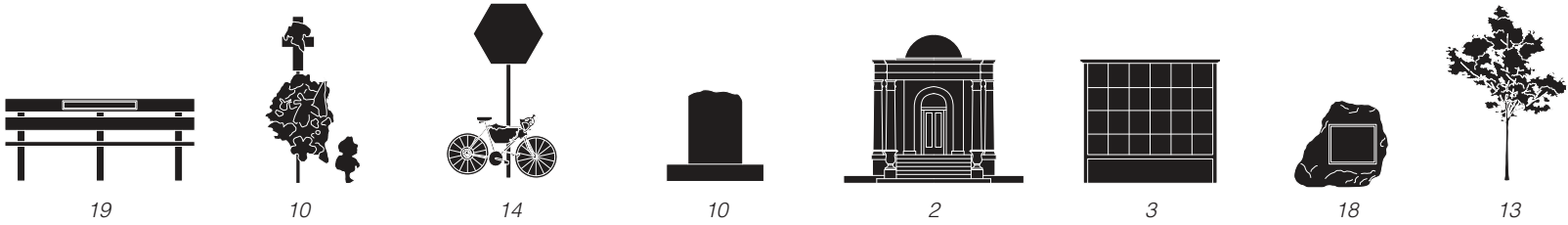
Collection



Paid for by Government/ Organization
(Expensive)

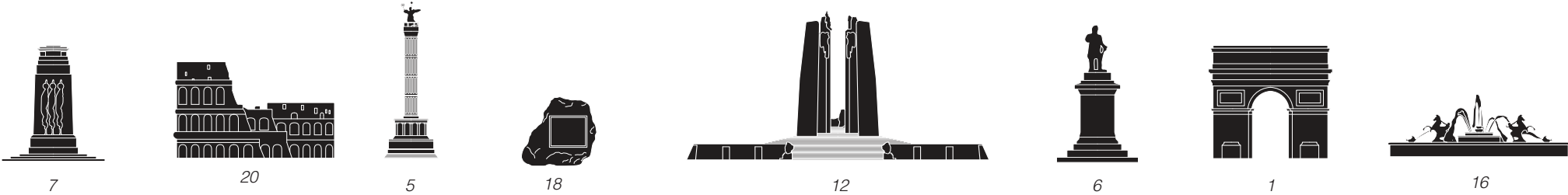


Paid for by Individual/ Small Group
(Affordable)

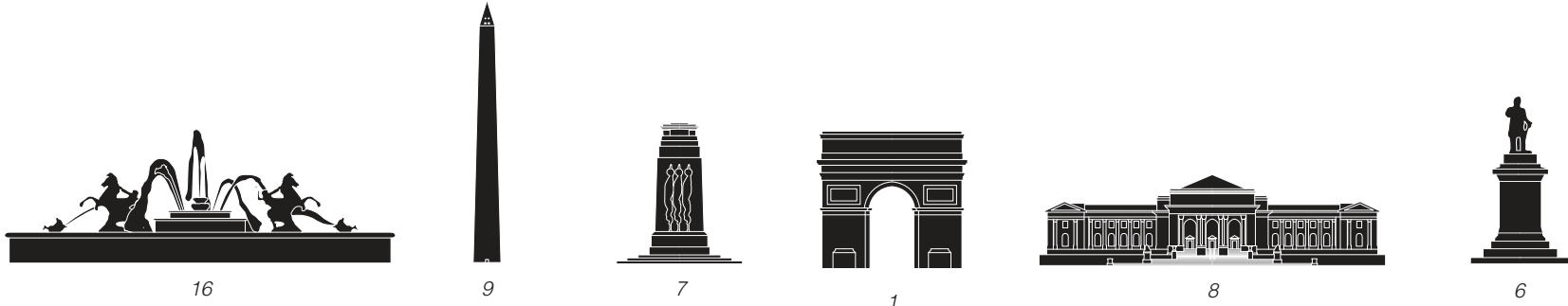


1. Arch 2. Mausoleum 3. Columbarium 4. Recieving Vault 5. Column 6. Statue 7. Cenotaph 8. Library/ Museum 9. Monolith 10. Roadside/ Collective Memorial 11. Gravestone 12. Megalith 13. Tree 14. Ghost Bike 15. Flame 16. Fountain 17. Light 18. Plaque 19. Commemorative Object 20. Ruin

Wars



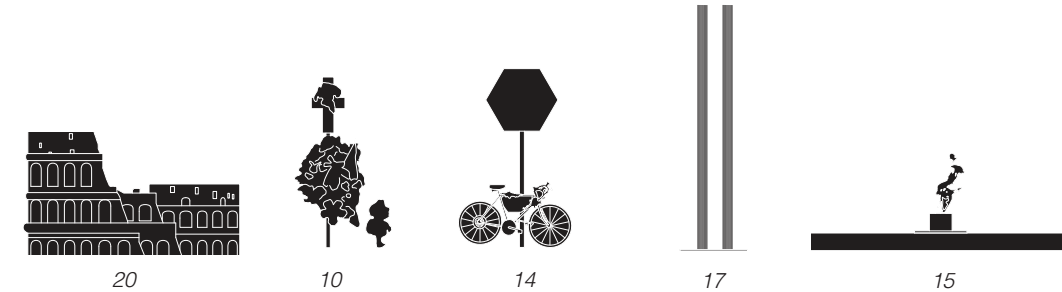
Historical Figures



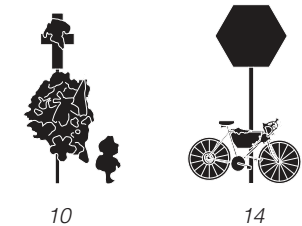
“Ordinary” People



Trauma/ Catastrophe



Illegal

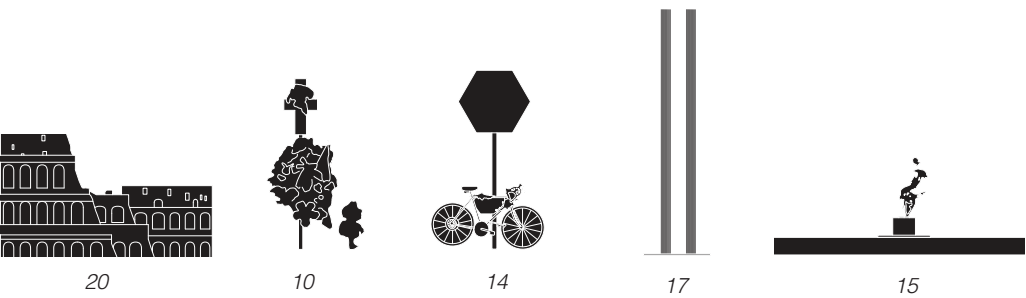


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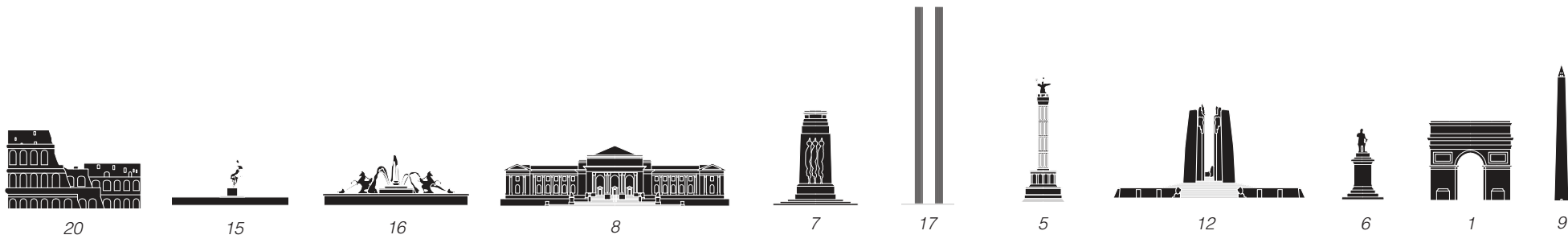
Growing/ Expanding



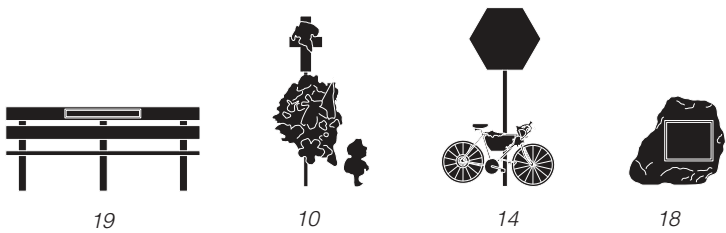
Decay/ Impermanance



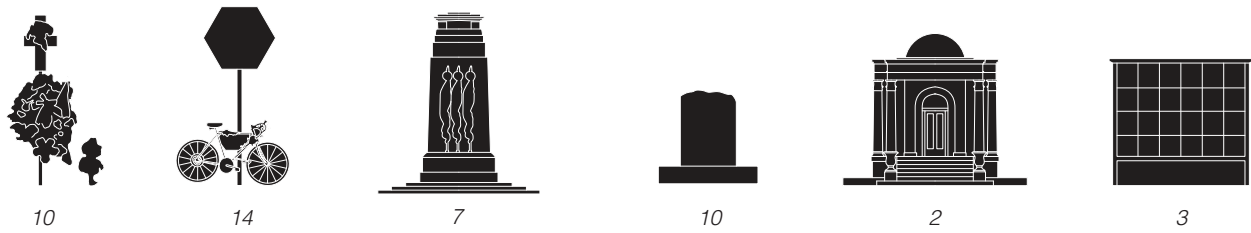
Tourist Attractions



Embracing the Everyday

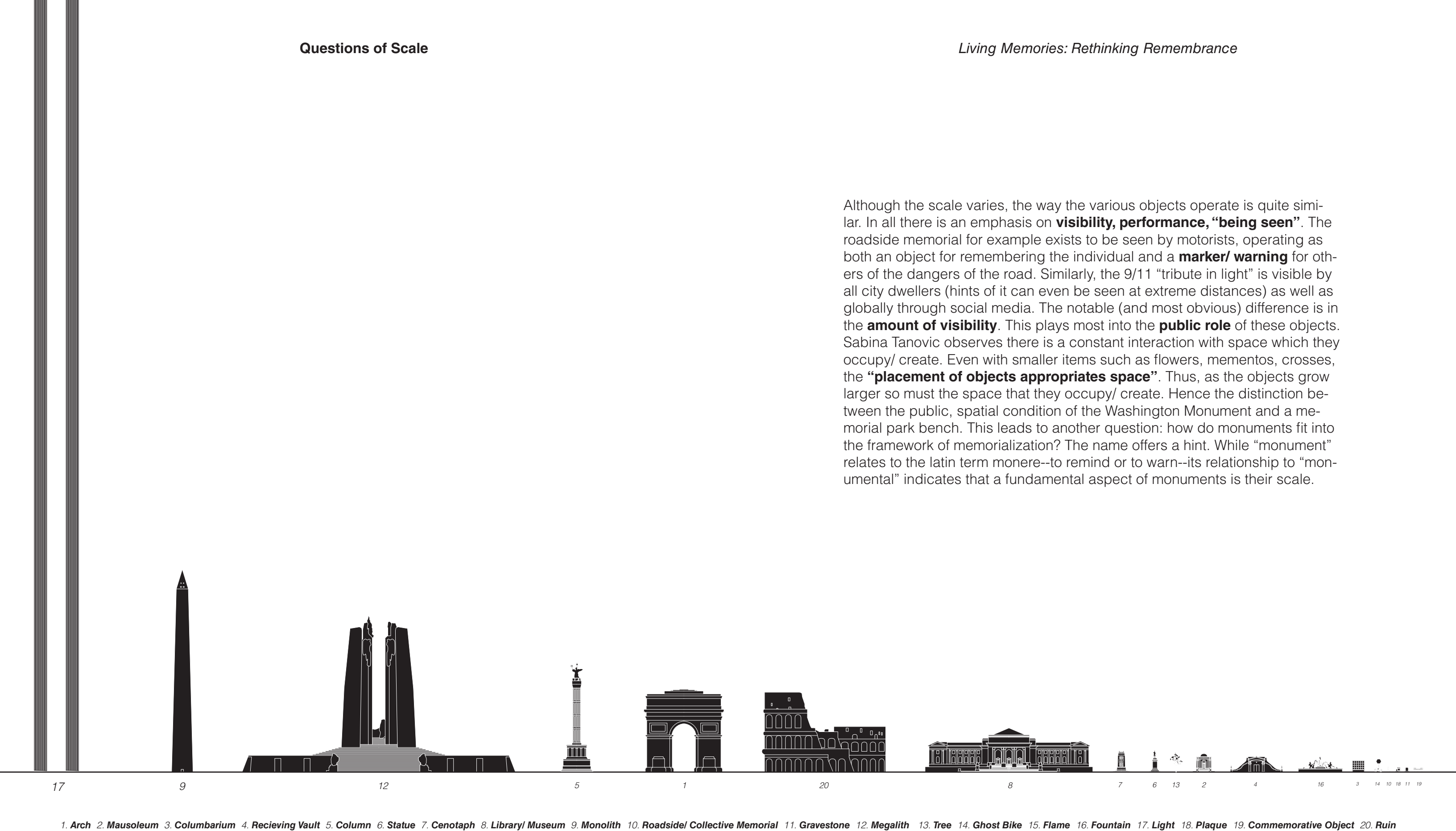


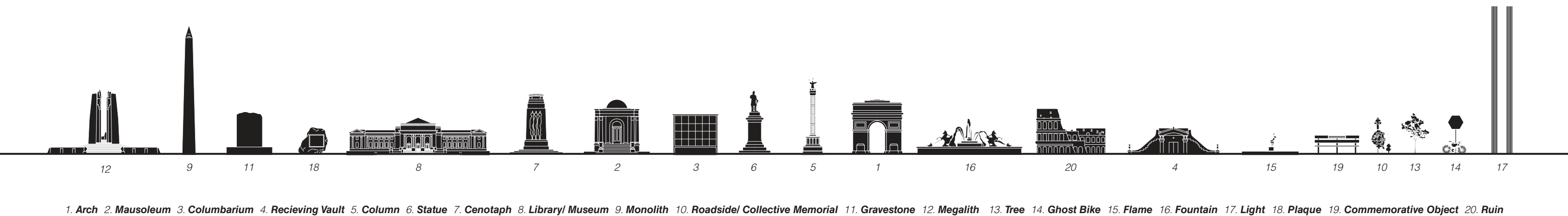
Ritualistic



1. Arch 2. Mausoleum 3. Columbarium 4. Recieving Vault 5. Column 6. Statue 7. Cenotaph 8. Library/ Museum 9. Monolith 10. Roadside/ Collective Memorial 11. Gravestone 12. Megalith 13. Tree 14. Ghost Bike 15. Flame 16. Fountain 17. Light 18. Plaque 19. Commemorative Object 20. Ruin

Although the scale varies, the way the various objects operate is quite similar. In all there is an emphasis on **visibility, performance, “being seen”**. The roadside memorial for example exists to be seen by motorists, operating as both an object for remembering the individual and a **marker/ warning** for others of the dangers of the road. Similarly, the 9/11 “tribute in light” is visible by all city dwellers (hints of it can even be seen at extreme distances) as well as globally through social media. The notable (and most obvious) difference is in the **amount of visibility**. This plays most into the **public role** of these objects. Sabina Tanovic observes there is a constant interaction with space which they occupy/ create. Even with smaller items such as flowers, mementos, crosses, the **“placement of objects appropriates space”**. Thus, as the objects grow larger so must the space that they occupy/ create. Hence the distinction between the public, spatial condition of the Washington Monument and a memorial park bench. This leads to another question: how do monuments fit into the framework of memorialization? The name offers a hint. While “monument” relates to the latin term monere--to remind or to warn--its relationship to “monumental” indicates that a fundamental aspect of monuments is their scale.

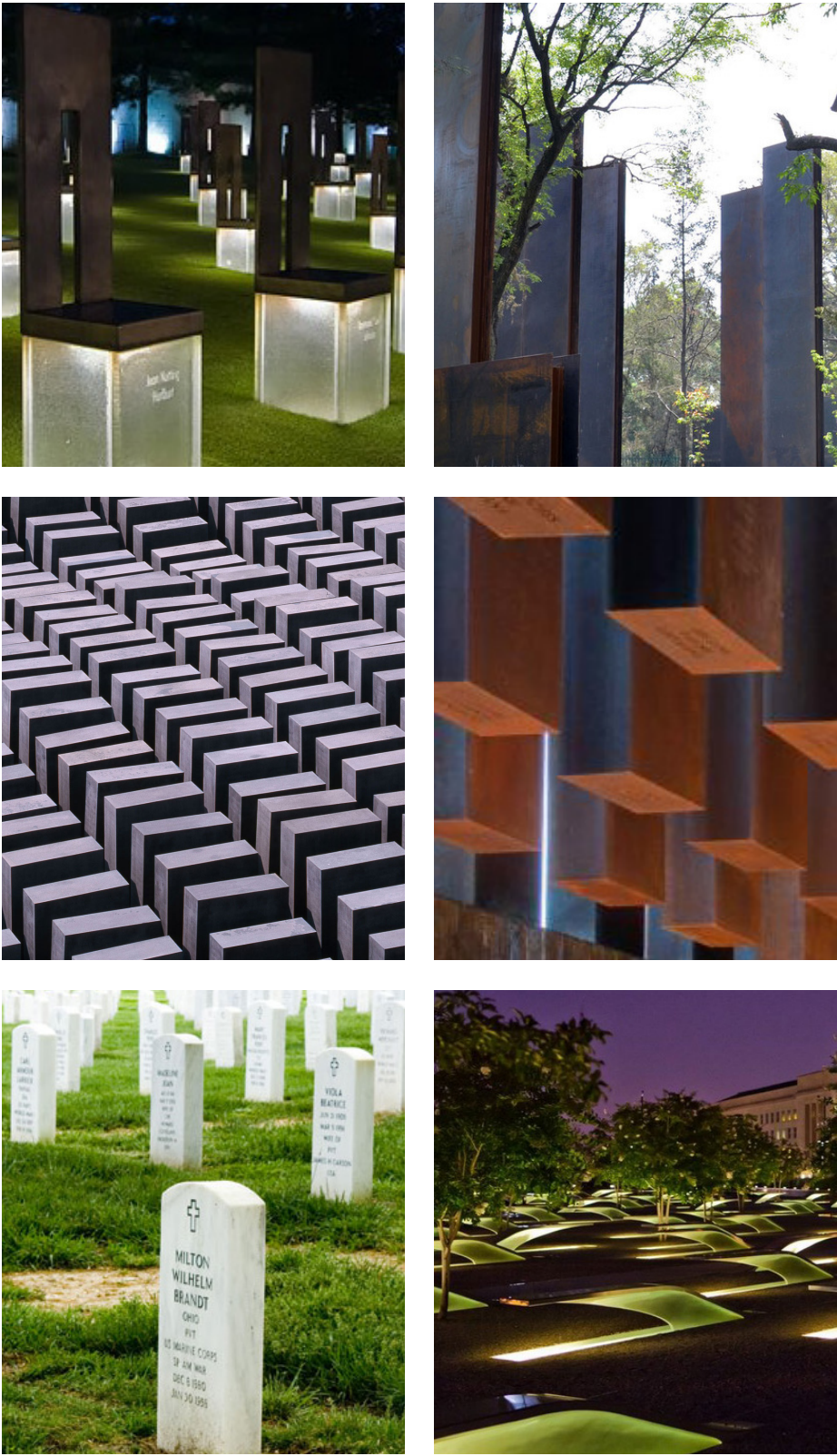




Spatial Language

The landscape/ field of objects is a common spatial condition in memorials. The repetition of a vast organization of similar or identical objects imparts the sense of great loss. In this strategy, the objects typically act as markers or symbols for the deceased. The tragedy of the commemorated event is made evident through the quantity of objects. The repetitive quality of the spatial field also creates a disorienting effect in which the individual in the space might become dislocated or lost. Movement through the space is generally uncontrolled, dictated only by the placement of objects. The degrees of control, disorientation, and loss are highly variable. For example, Eisenman’s Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe operates in a more exaggerated manner than the Arlington National Cemetery or Field of Empty Chairs. The spacing of objects, their height, and treatment of the ground plane suggest a more deliberate curation of experience in Eisenman’s Memorial than the other two. Whereas Eisenman’s emphasis was on imparting a “feeling of otherness”, The Field of Empty Chairs and the Arlington National Cemetery more directly associate the object with the loss of human life. This selection, thus indicates the multitude of ways in which this relatively similar spatial strategy is deployed to create different conditions of engagement.

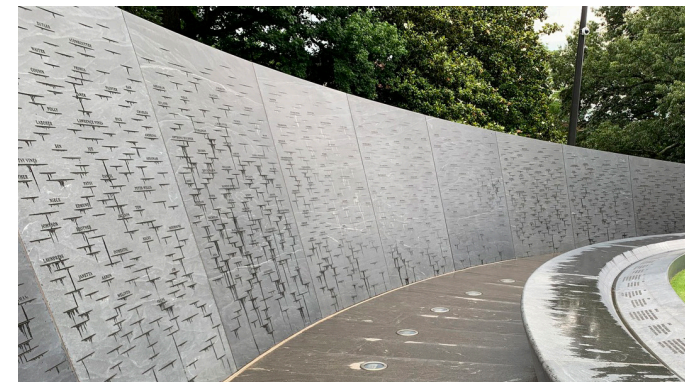
The Field of Empty Chairs
Gaeta-Springall Arquitectos, Memorial to Victims of Violence
Peter Eisenman, Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe
Mass Design Group, The National Memorial for Peace and Justice
Arlington Cemetery
Beckman and Kaseman, Pentagon Memorial



Oftentimes the memorial is conceived of as a wall. The wall tends to operate as an archive or collection of names and is treated as both evidence of the event and as a tribute to the deceased. Its surface is inscribed or carved to reinforce its durability/ stability, behaving as an eternal display. Spatially, it can carve into the ground and suggest movement (Maya Lin's, Vietnam Veterans Memorial) or denote a public space for gathering (Memorial to Enslaved Laborers, Ring of Remembrance, Ellis Island Wall of Honor). The greatest shortcoming of this strategy is in its finality and permanence. In the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in particular, individuals tend to leave flowers and mementos at the foot of the wall as a tribute to their loved ones. Sabina Tanovic observes “the leaving of objects suggests a need to feel invited to interact with the space”. Thus, these objects indicate the necessity for engagement, performance, interactivity.

Maya Lin, Vietnam Veterans Memorial
Howeler + Yoon, Memorial to Enslaved Laborers
Agence d'Architecture, Ring of Remembrance
Ellis Island Wall of Honor

Sabina Tanovic, From Temporary to Permanent: Public Mourning and the Architecture of Memorial Space



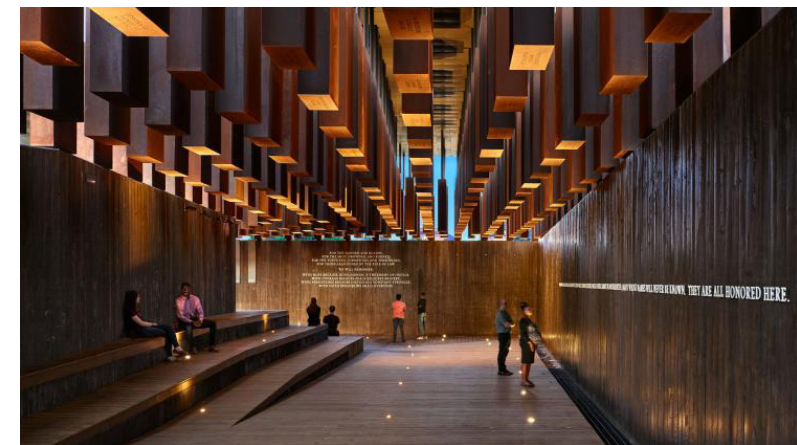
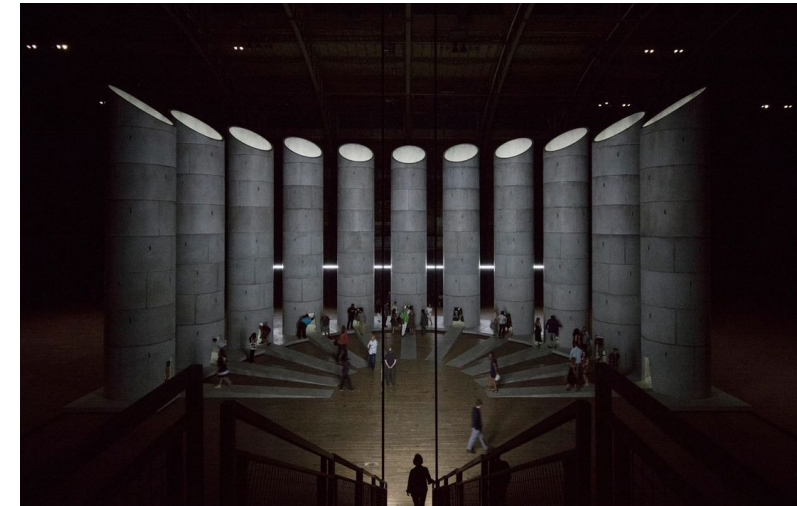
The act of remembrance is frequently treated as a curated sequence. In this spatial strategy, the emphasis is placed on the experiential conditions of the memorial. By identifying specific phenomenological concerns, the architect curates the experience of the memorial. For example, the desire to recreate the movement through an underground space, or through a disorienting void, or along a funereal route will play into the ritualistic performance of the project. This strategy is quite successful in engaging the individual by imparting a specific feeling, but is deemed too abstract or vague by some.

Peter Zumthor, Steilneset Memorial
Wodiczko Bonder, Memorial to the Abolition of Slavery
Miralles + Pinos, Igualada Cemetery
Daniel Libeskind, Holocaust Memorial Museum



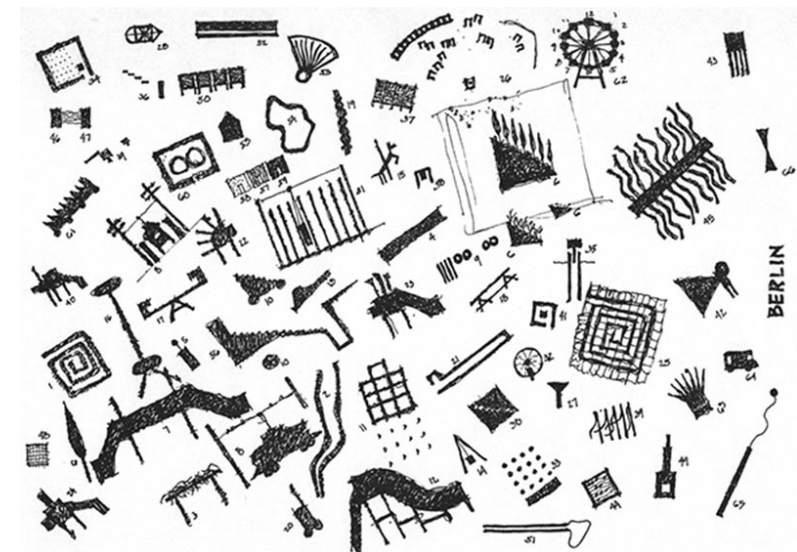
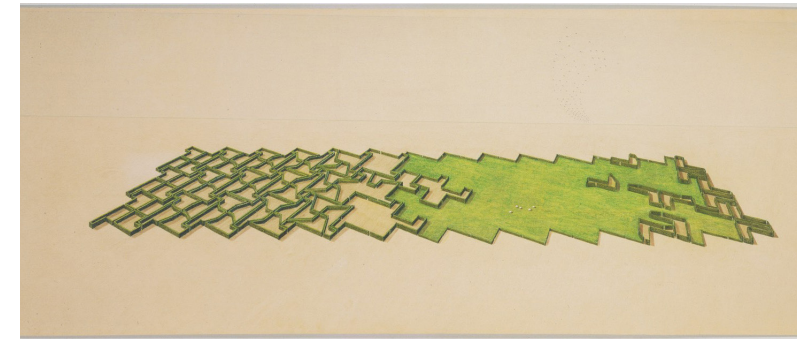
Inherent in all memorials are themes of performance, ritual, and display. In Taryn Simon's *An Occupation of Loss*, “professional mourners” were hired to act out rituals of grief. The project makes explicit the public, choreographed aspects of mourning. Shohei Shigematsu commented: “The design was sonically-motivated, focusing on the performative act of loss rather than its physical manifestation, which has been historically marked by multiple scales – from tombstones to the World Trade Center Memorial. The industrial wells were configured into a readymade ruin that responds to both personal and monumental dimensions.” In the case of the Lincoln Memorial we see how the public space that surrounds and fronts the memorial becomes the “stage” for an alternative act of performance that has been dislocated from mourning but is still rooted in remembrance. In the National Memorial for Peace and Justice, the public’s interaction with the memorial is considered in a similar way, as movement through and interaction with the project constitutes the “performance”.

Taryn Simon, An Occupation of Loss
The Lincoln Memorial
Mass Design Group, The National Memorial for Peace and Justice

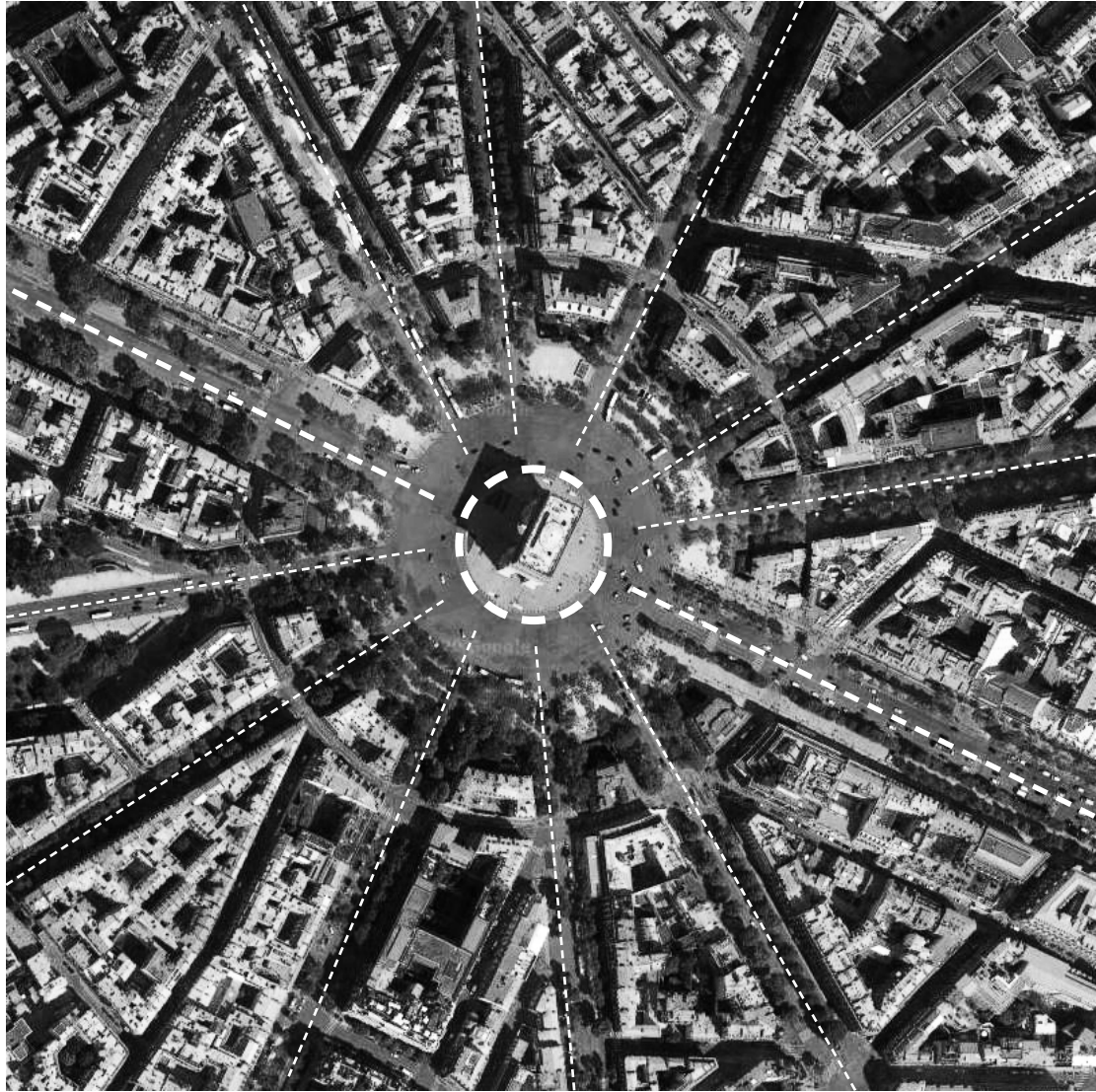


The memorial as a process aims to engage a collective in the act of memorializing. It treats the memorial, not as a finished product, but as a continuous project. For example, Emilio Ambasz' Pro-Memoria Garden begins with divided plots that have been assigned to individual members of the community. Overtime, the individuals care for their garden which begins to bleed into those of others. Eventually, the plots have become a single collective garden which all members of the community care for. Hejduk's Victims project is a growing memorial of characters, selected by citizens of Berlin. Each of the characters is a symbol or stand in for a person. It emphasizes the passing of time and participation. Nikola Basic's "Field of Crosses" was almost entirely constructed by volunteers. They were responsible for the construction and placement of twelve dry wall crosses. The project was, thus, recognized through both collective and individual witnessing.

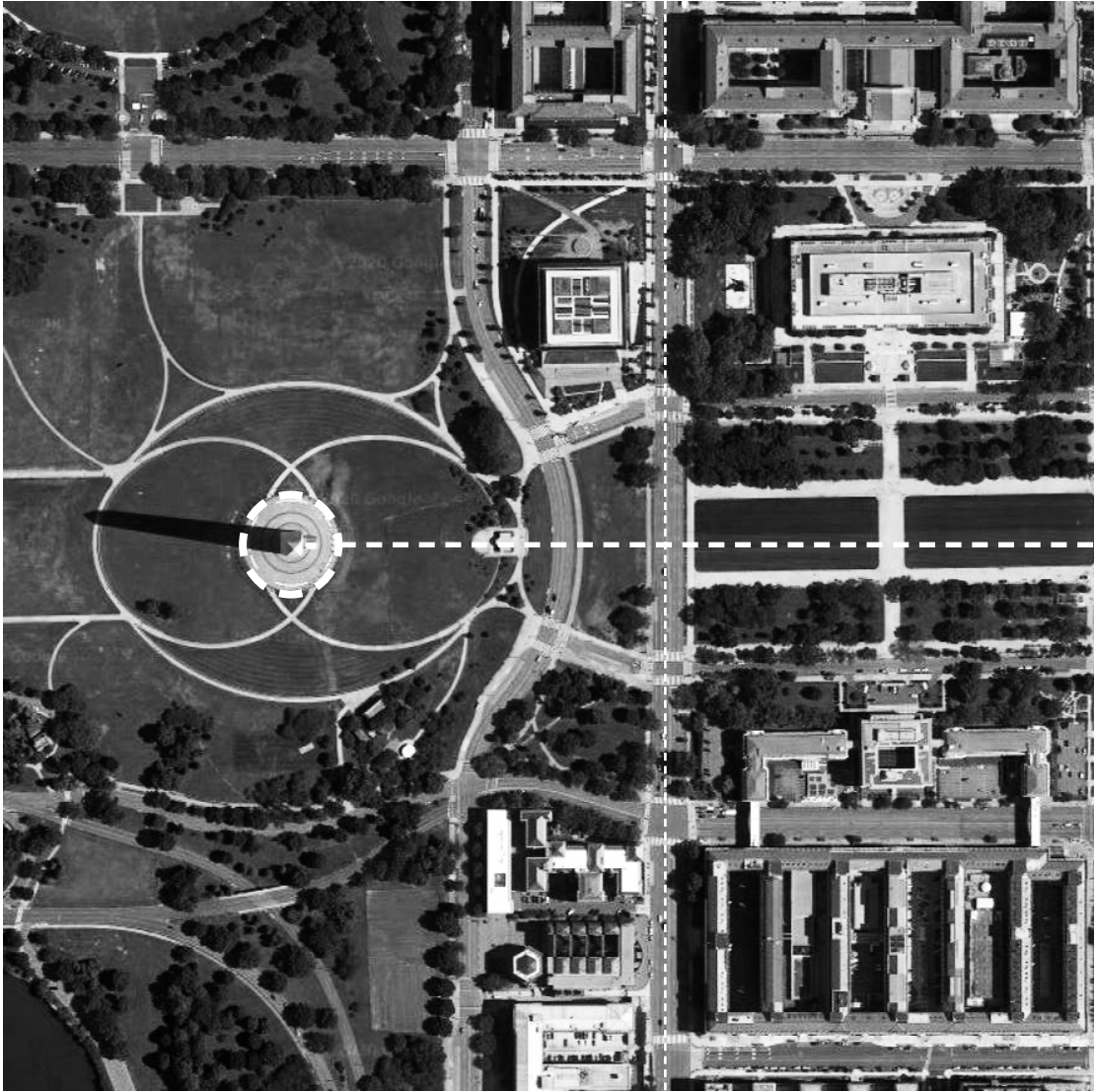
Emilio Ambasz, Pro-Memoria Garden
John Hejduk, Victims
Nikola Bašić, Field of Crosses



Site Conditions



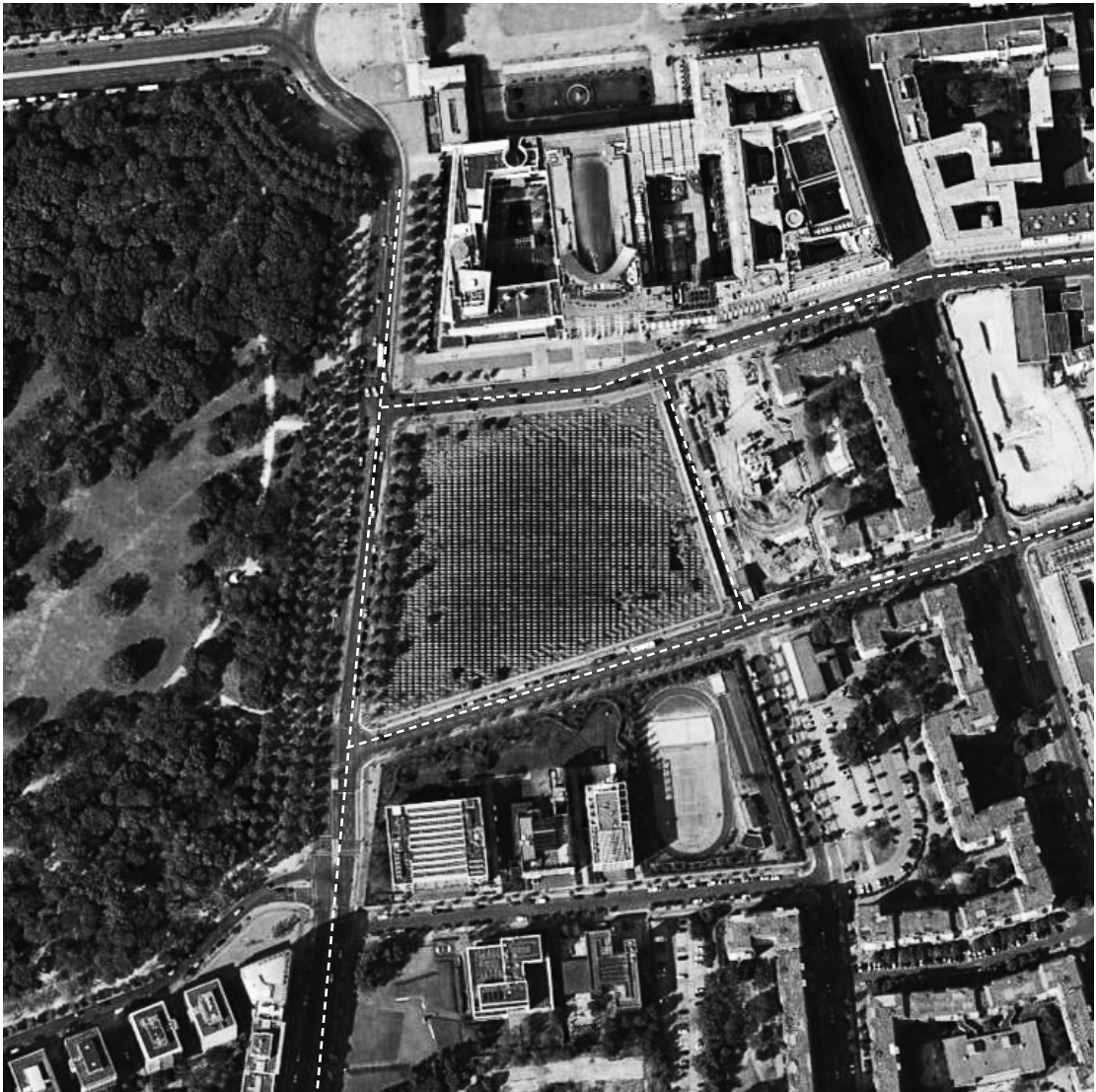
Urban Obstacle/ Node (Monument)
Convergence of Streets
Arc de Triomphe (Paris, France)



Urban Axis (Monument)
Orientation of Urban Axis
Washington Monument (District of Columbia, USA)



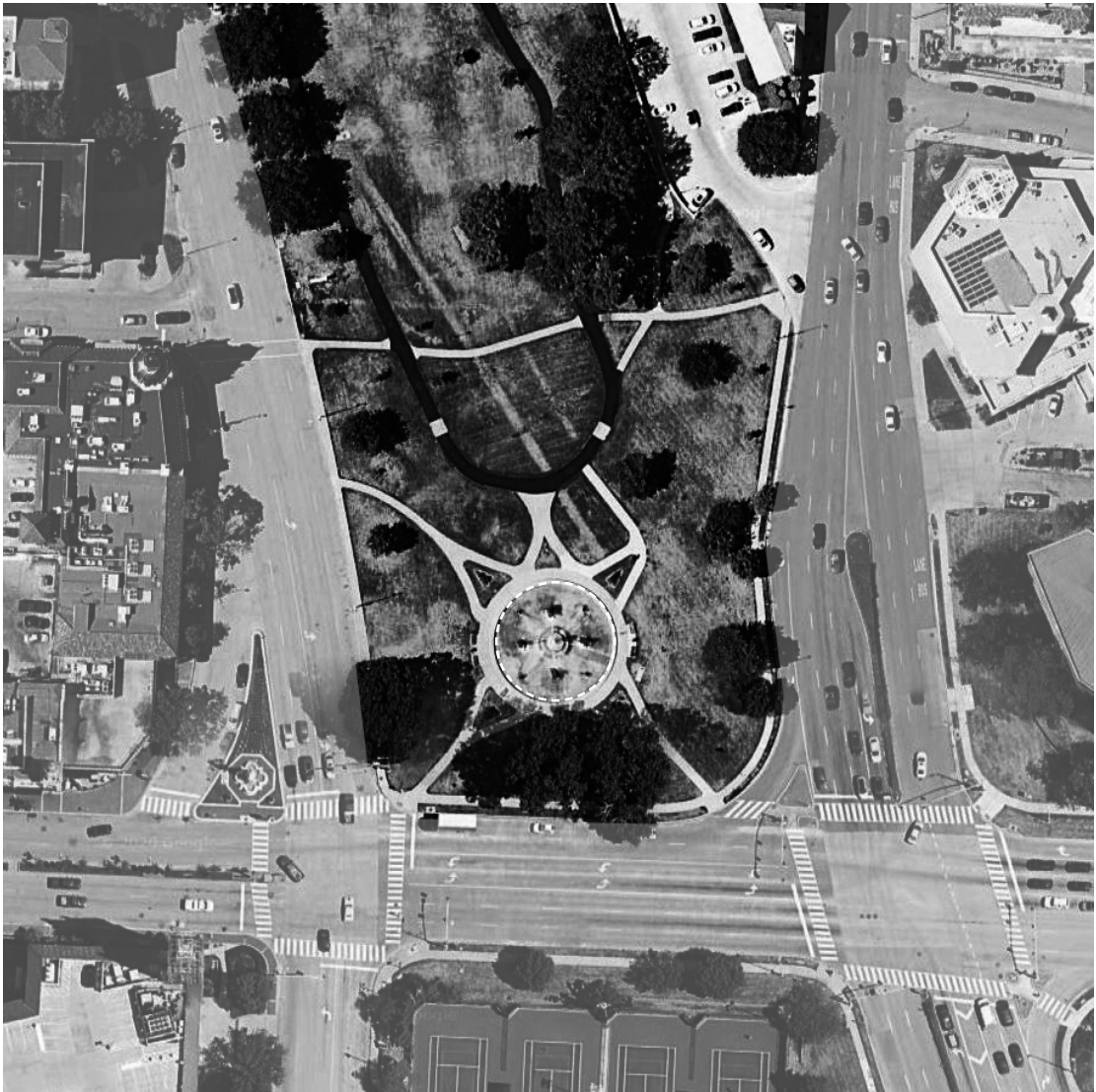
Green Park (Memorial--Wall Condition)
Internal Relationship, Connection Through Movement
Vietnam Veterans Memorial (District of Columbia, USA)



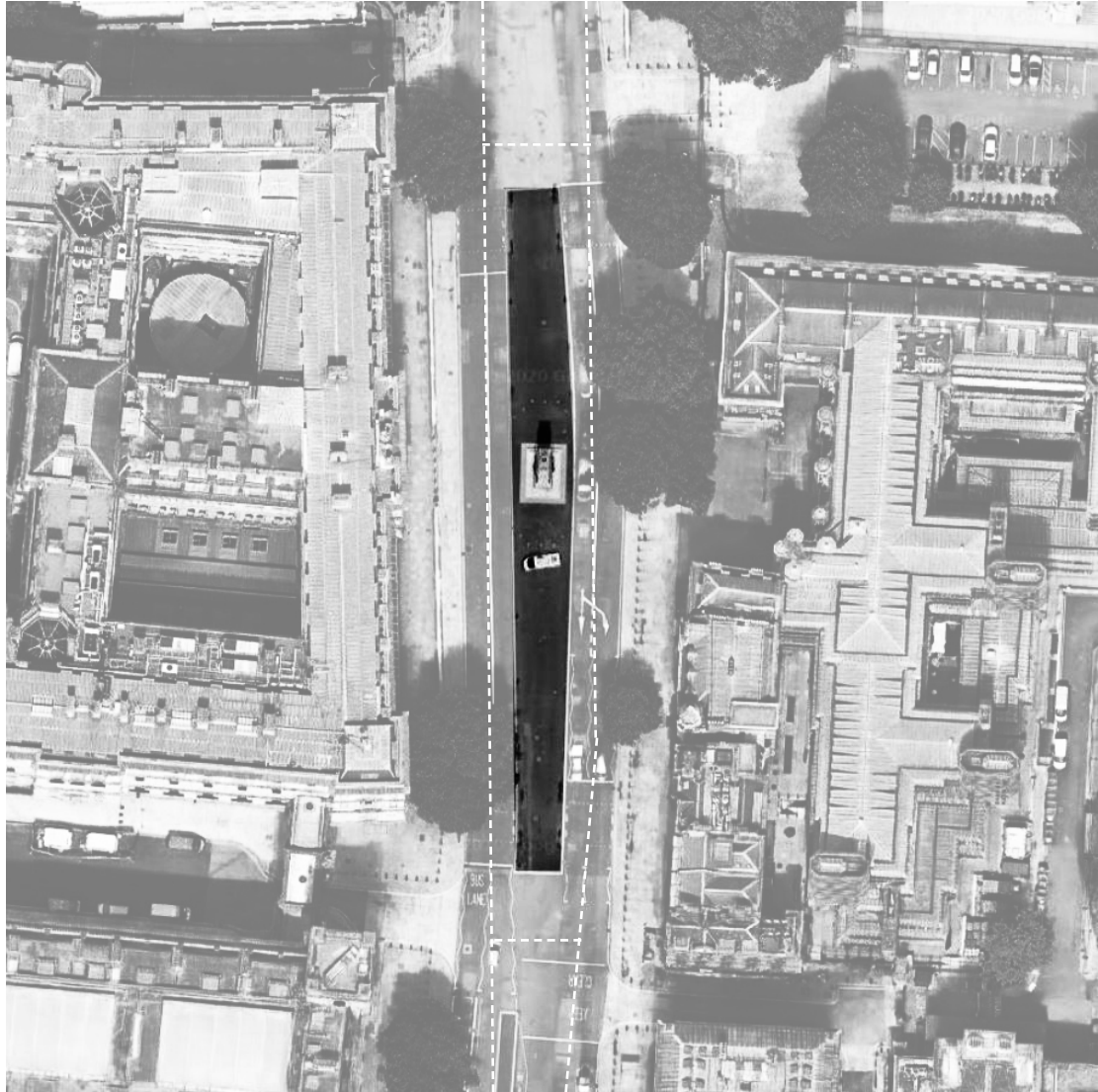
Urban Park (Memorial--Landscape Condition)
Internal Relationship, Plot Infill
Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe (Berlin, Germany)



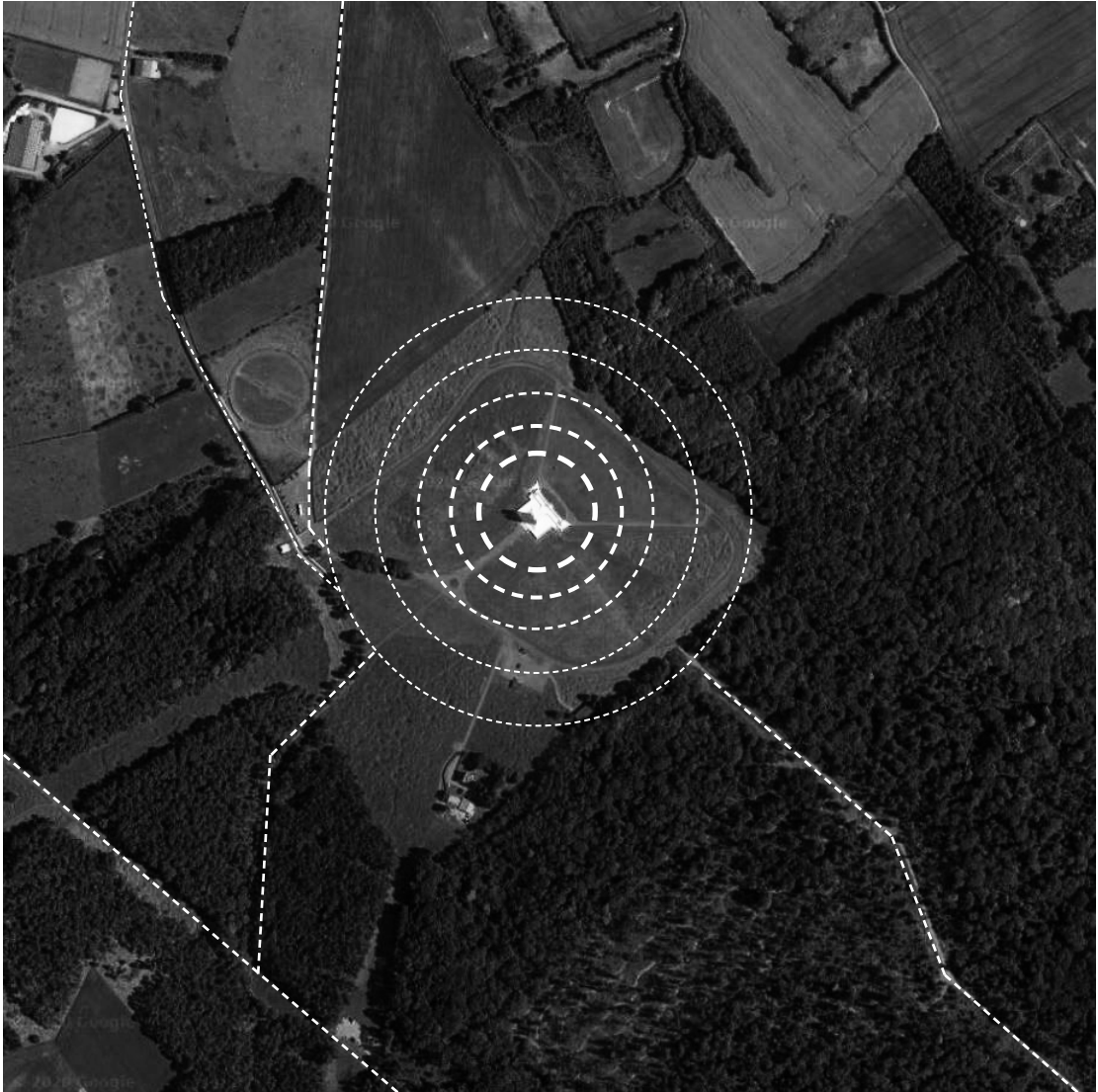
Cemetery (Mausoleums, Columbariums, Gravestones)
Internal Relationship, Micro Urban Landscape
Oakwood Cemetery (Syracuse, USA)



Urban Park (Memorial Fountain)
Connection to Urban Environment Established through Paths
J.C. Nichols Memorial Fountain (Kansas City, USA)

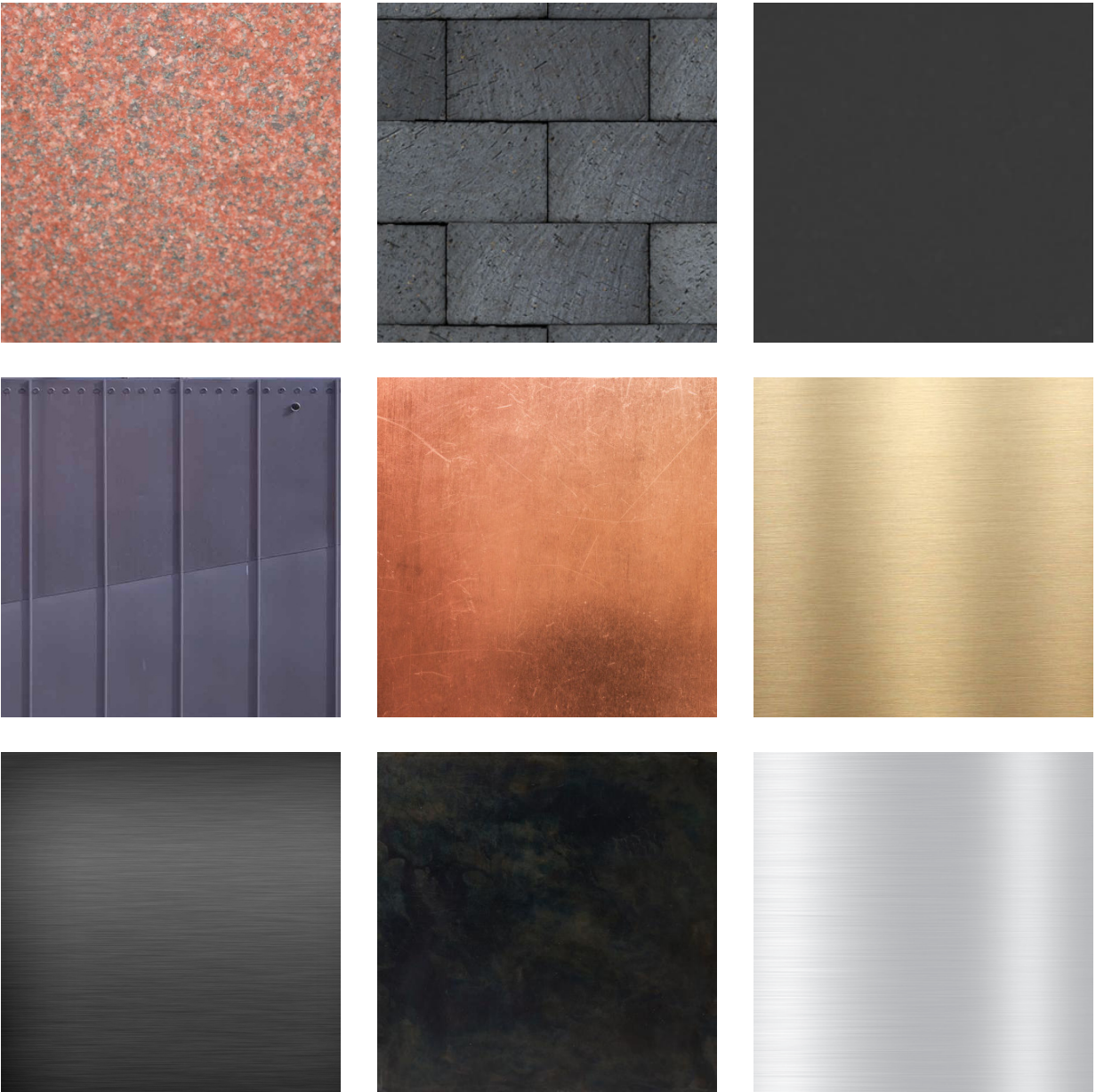
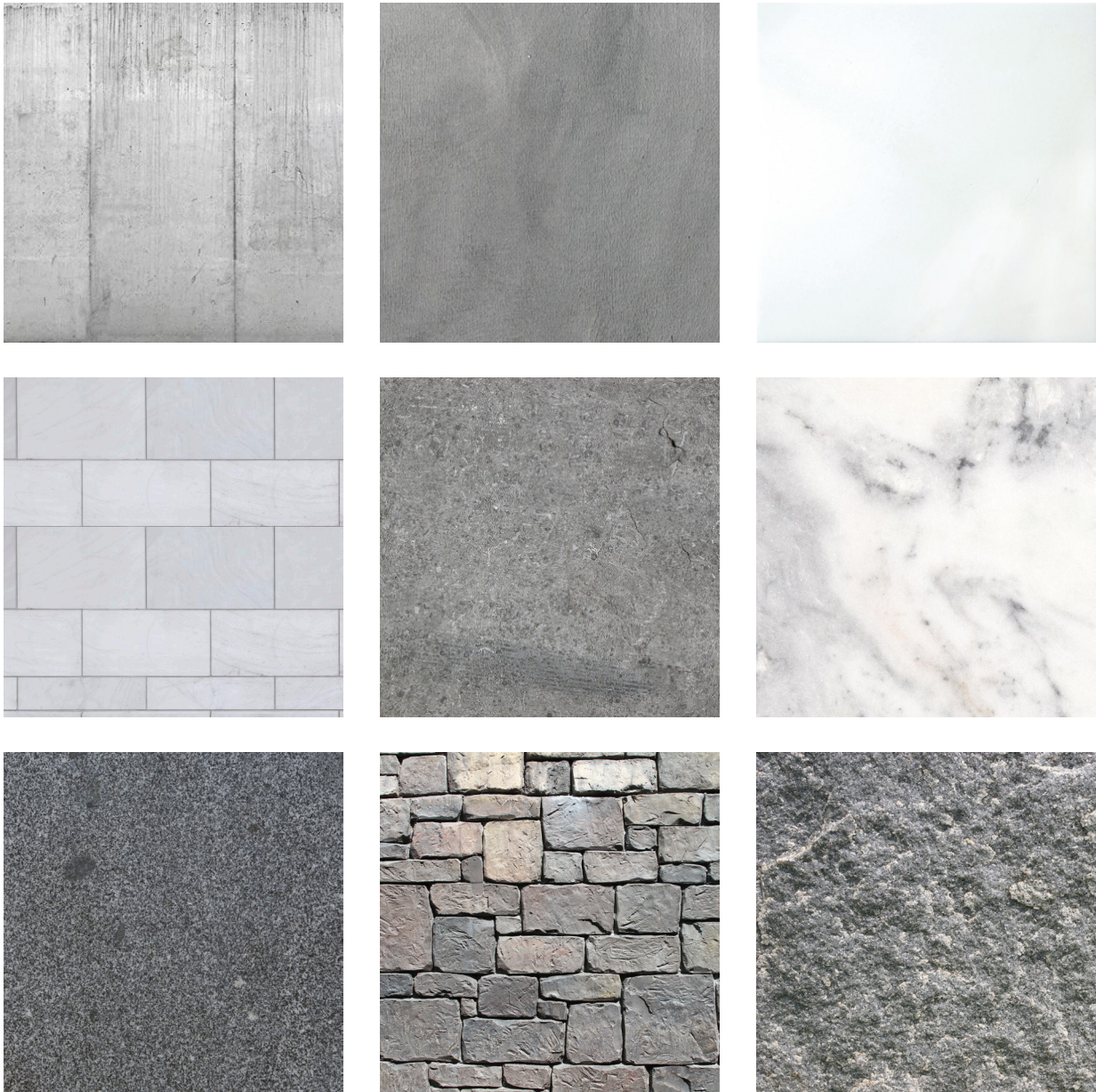


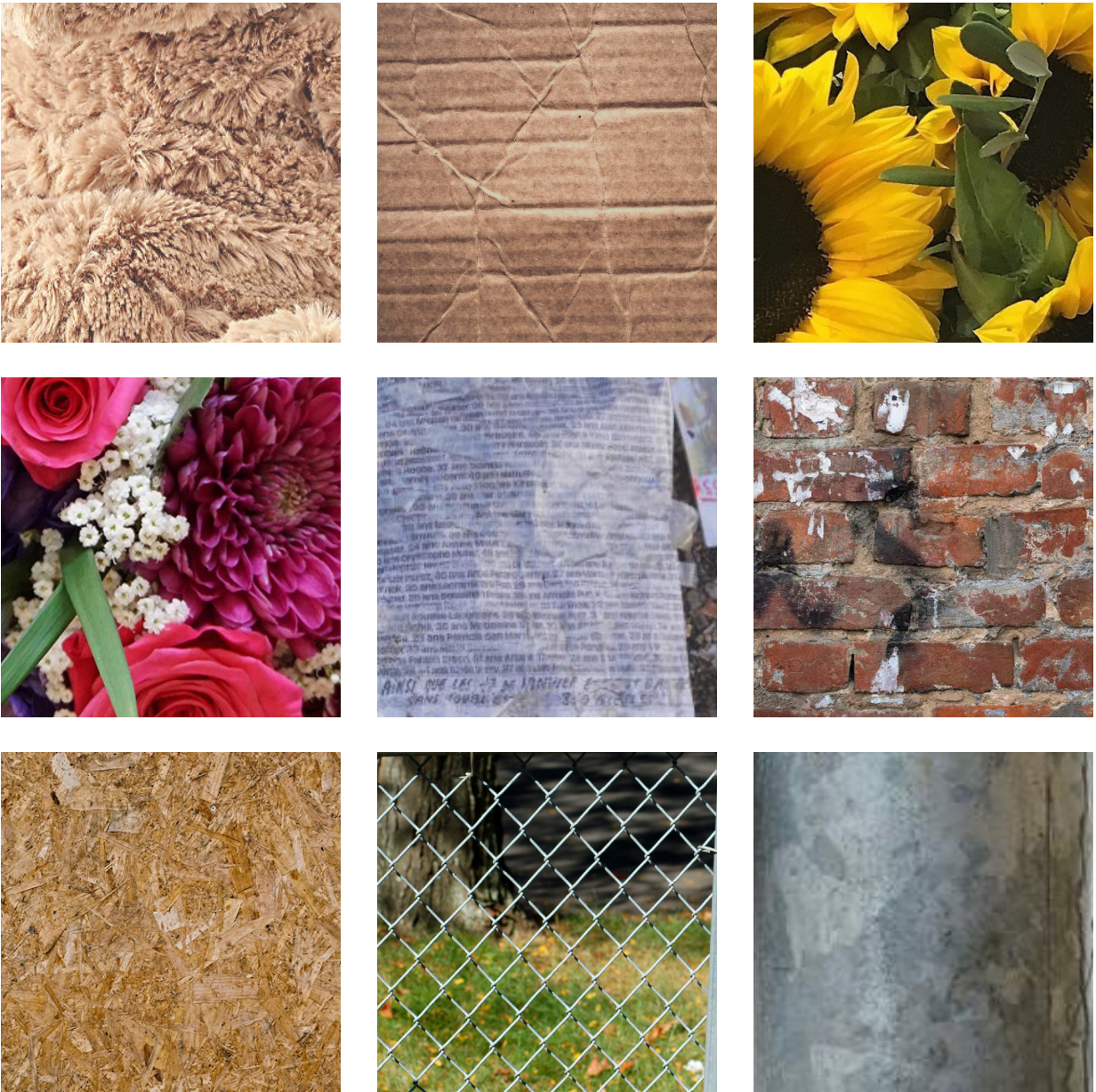
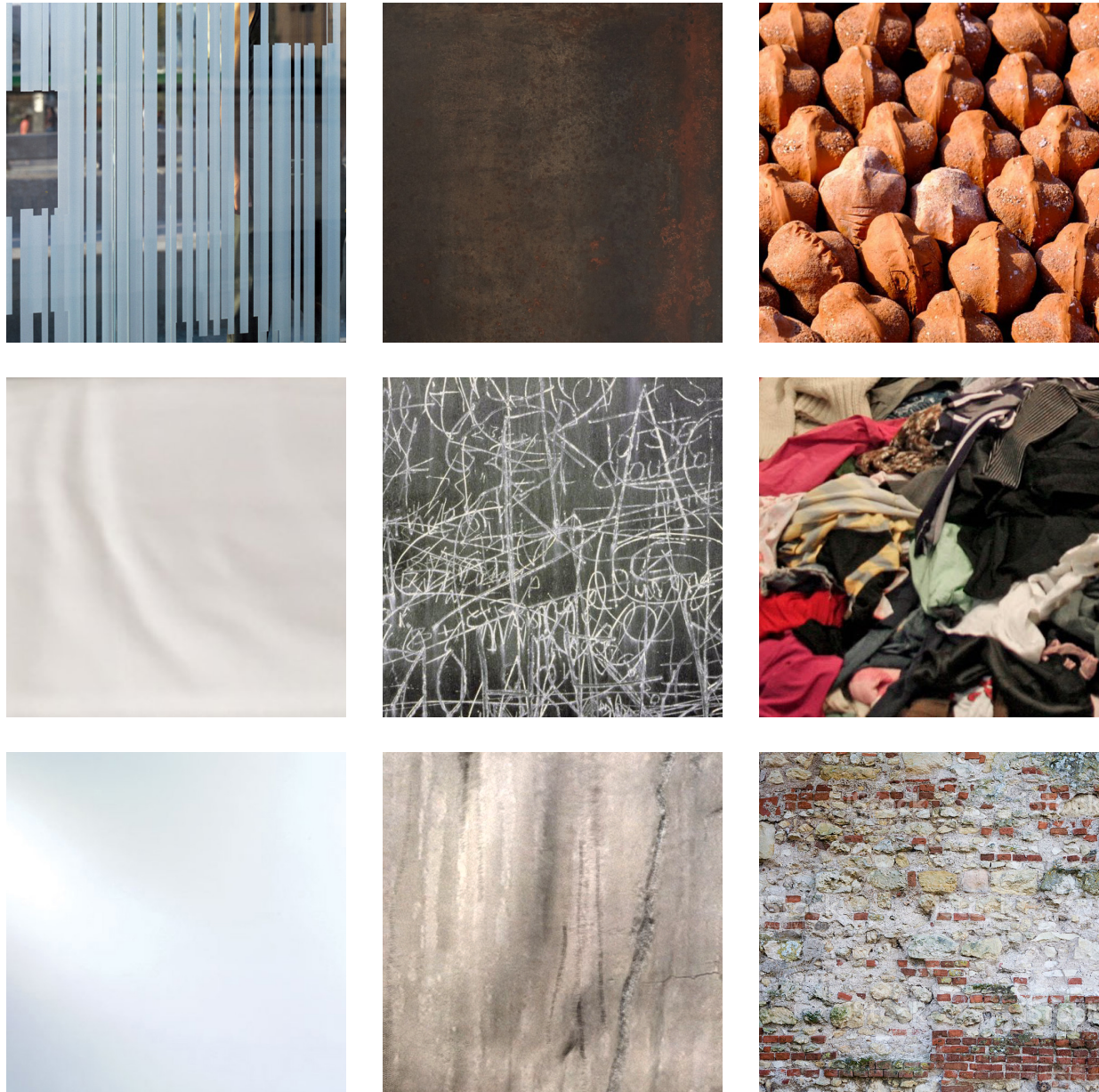
Median (Cenotaph, Statue)
Infill of Leftover Plot Between Roads
Whitehall Cenotaph (London, UK)



Pilgrimage (Megalith)
Removed Object
Vimy Memorial (Givenchy, France)

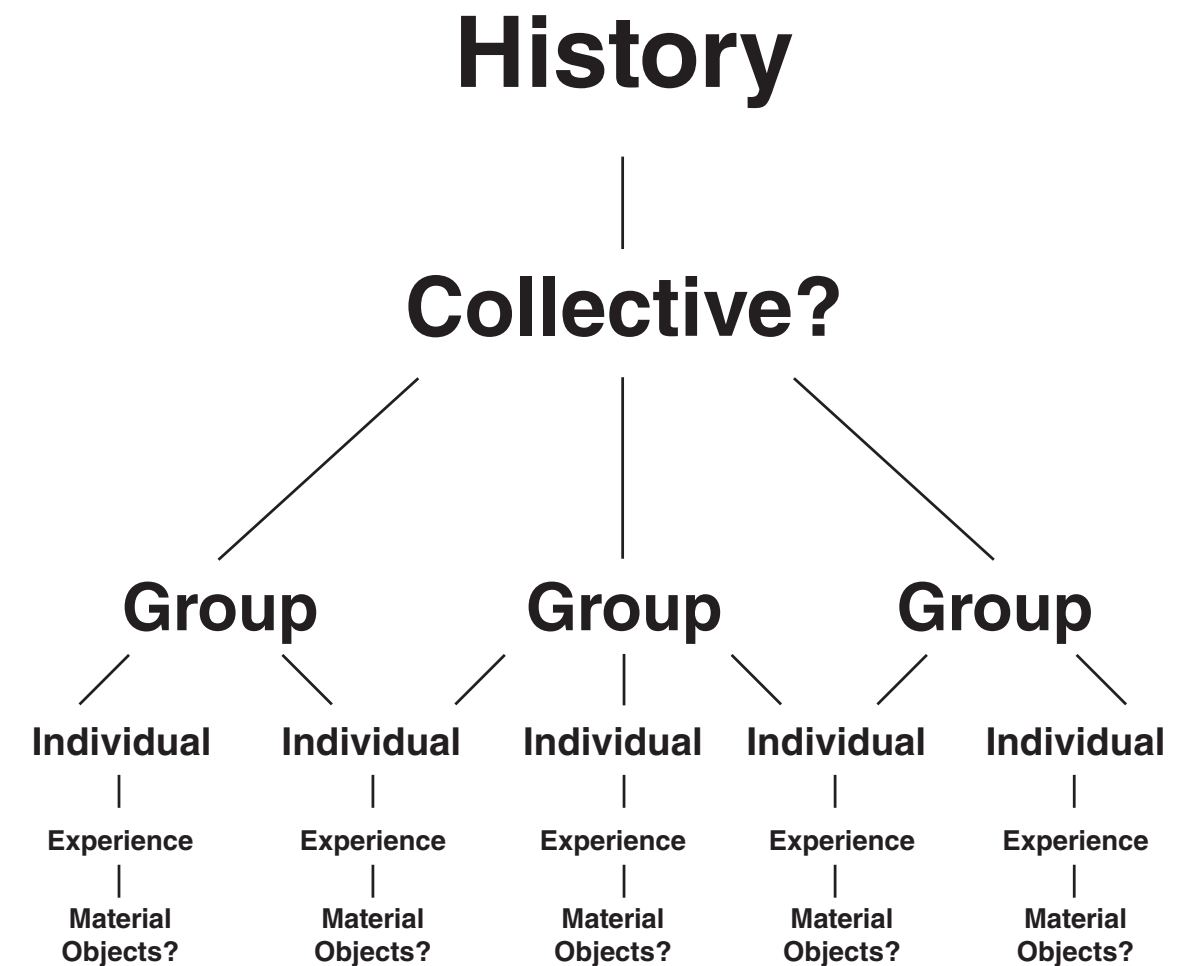
Materials





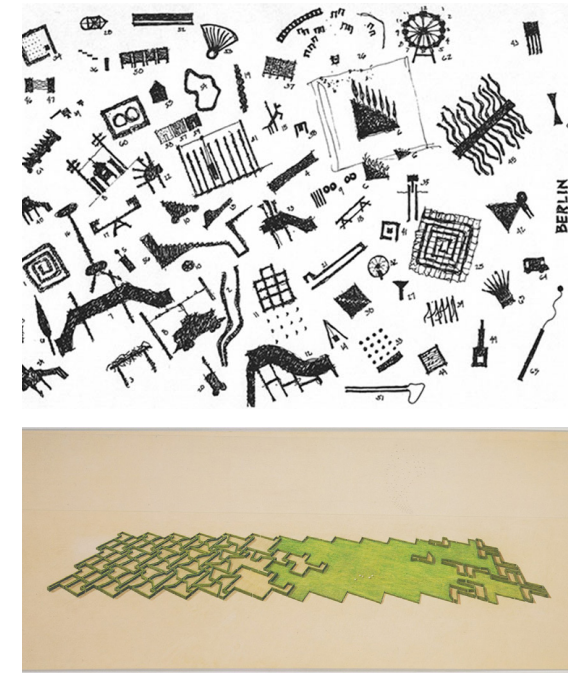
Alternative Insights

The idea of “Collective Memory” was first coined by Maurice Halbwach in the 20th century. Halbwach engages the collective through separate groups, each with their own separate shared memory. These groups consist of individuals that might be members of other groups. The individual contributes to the group memory through their own lived experiences. These experiences are characterized through the notion of **episodic memory**, which is defined as highly personal and subjective. This contrasts **semantic memory**, which generally describes abstracts information and facts that are independent of experience. History tends to be constructed through semantic memory as opposed to episodic memory. The conventional memorial also fails to acknowledge the value of individual experience in its conception of memory. Michel Foucault asserts that **“memory is actually a very important factor in struggle ... if one controls people’s memory, one controls their dynamism. And one also controls their experience, their knowledge of previous struggles”**. This suggests that the typical strategy of memorializing privileges specific groups through the engagement/ creation of collective memory. These groups tend to be the ones capable of financing or overseeing the construction of the memorial itself, devaluing the role of individual experience. Thus, the memorial becomes both indicative of bias and might even become a device for control. Instead of emphasizing a specific event, can one engage **multiple memories and experiences** to allow for different viewpoints?



Collecting Expanding Archiving/ Sorting Becoming

-ive?

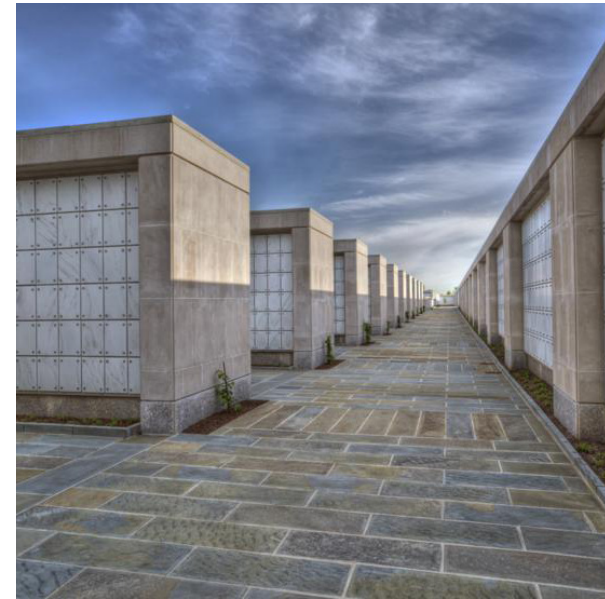


Interrogating the Role of the Designer (How Can the Designer Act as a Facilitator?)

- Design of scaffold/shelf (columbarium, mausoleum, library, museum, retail/ grocery store, grassroots memorials)
- Design of kit of parts for assembly
- Design of potential outcome (Nikola Basic *Field of Crosses*)
- Design of objects for arrangement (John Hejduk *Victims*)
- Design of ritual/ procedure (Emilio Amasz *Pro Memoria Garden*)

Collecting is a fundamental aspect of remembrance. What is selected to be discarded and what is kept indicates a certain valuation of objects that varies from person to person. These objects might act as a reminder of the deceased's personality, interests, a moment in time, almost anything that provides comfort in the grieving process. For example, after the passing of a loved one, it is typical for individuals to place a number of objects on a shelf or gather them in a collection to reminisce over. Even less valued objects, like clothing, that get hidden away in attics or closets offer momentary consolation when rediscovered. The collection is also an archive of evidence. In the case of an individual it provides proof of their existence, for an event it reinforces that the event occurred. It is a continuous process, constantly expanding and changing. Themes of collecting are displayed in various formal memorials as well as "grassroots" ones, suggesting the potential for further analysis. By looking at the ways in which collections occur, perhaps a more interactive, temporal, and collective memorial can be developed.

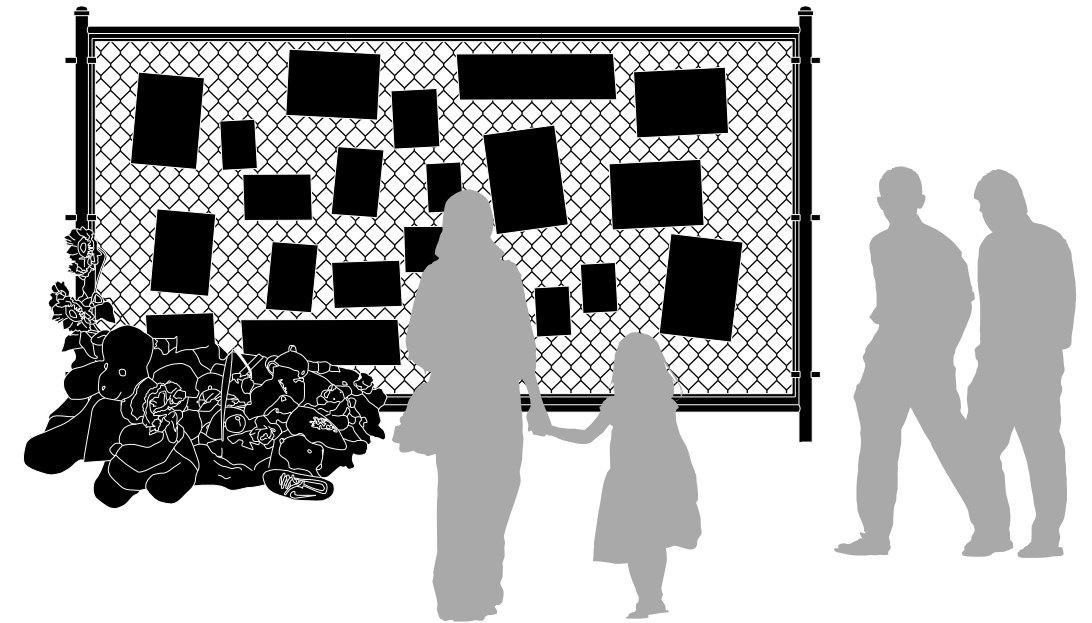
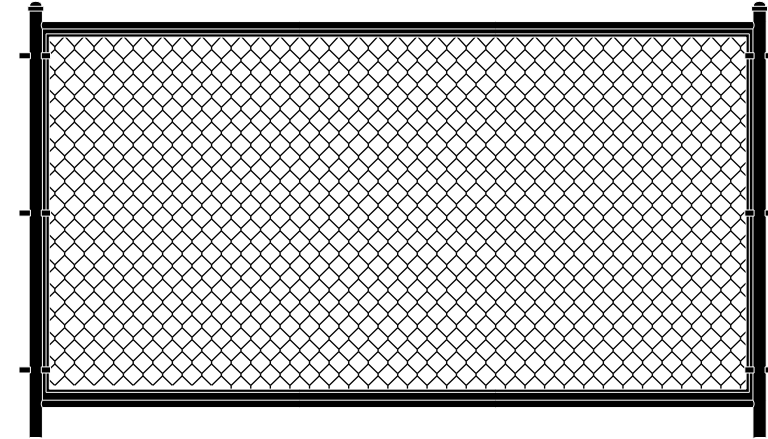
*Arlington National Cemetery Columbarium
Michael Brown Memorial, Ferguson
Hiroshima Memorial Museum*



Role of the Wall

One way that many “grassroots” memorials develop is by appropriating an existing wall or fence. Typically individuals will attach or hang signs on a fence with zip ties, cables, or tape. Walls usually require the use of paste, glue, or tape. In addition to signs, one will often see flowers, stuffed animals, and other mementos hung. The role of the fence or wall is then transformed into a display, allowing for high visibility. Much like “conventional” wall memorials like Maya Lin’s Vietnam Memorial, the foot of the wall serves as a location for the placement of additional objects.

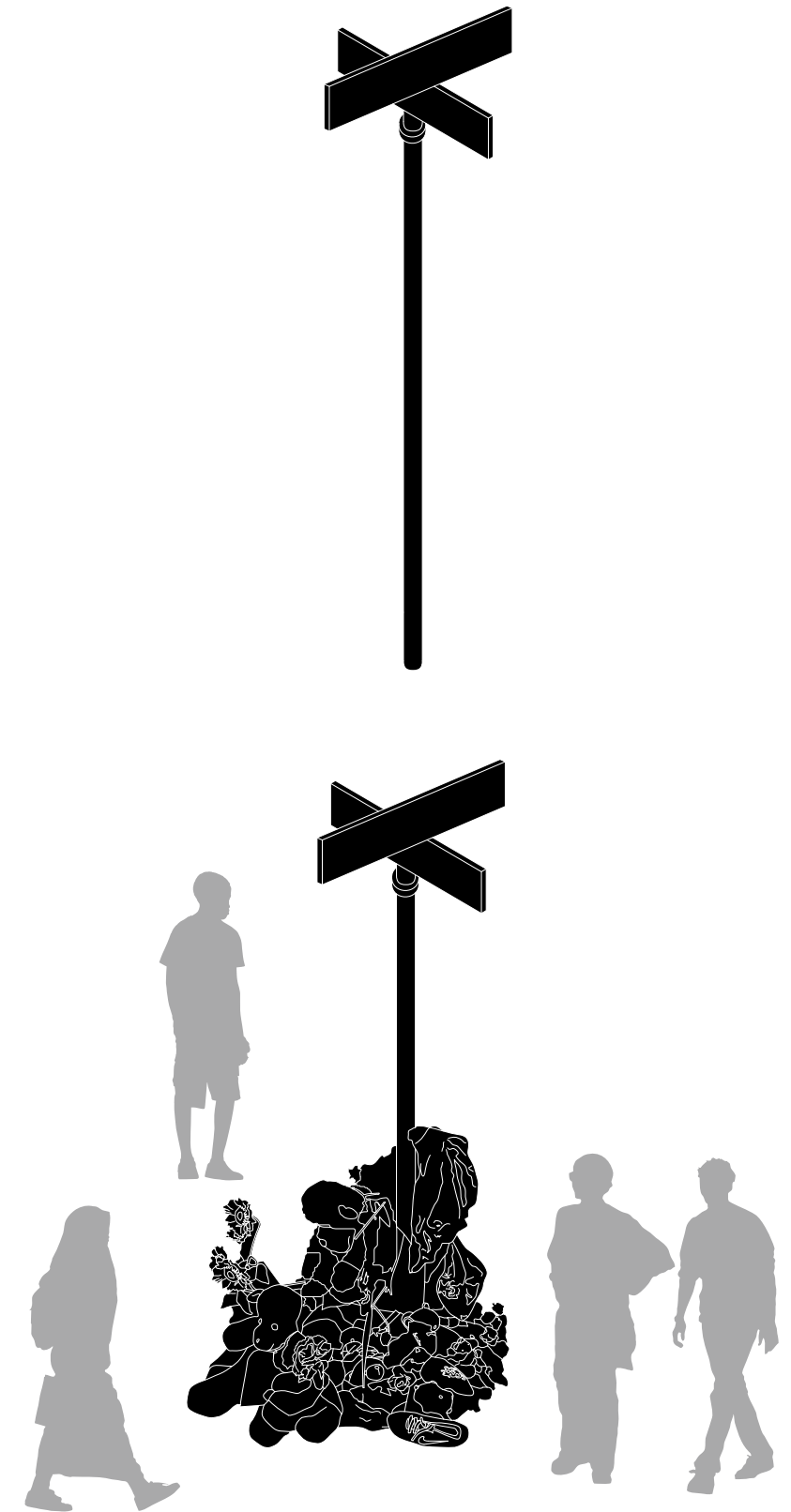
Living Memories: Rethinking Remembrance

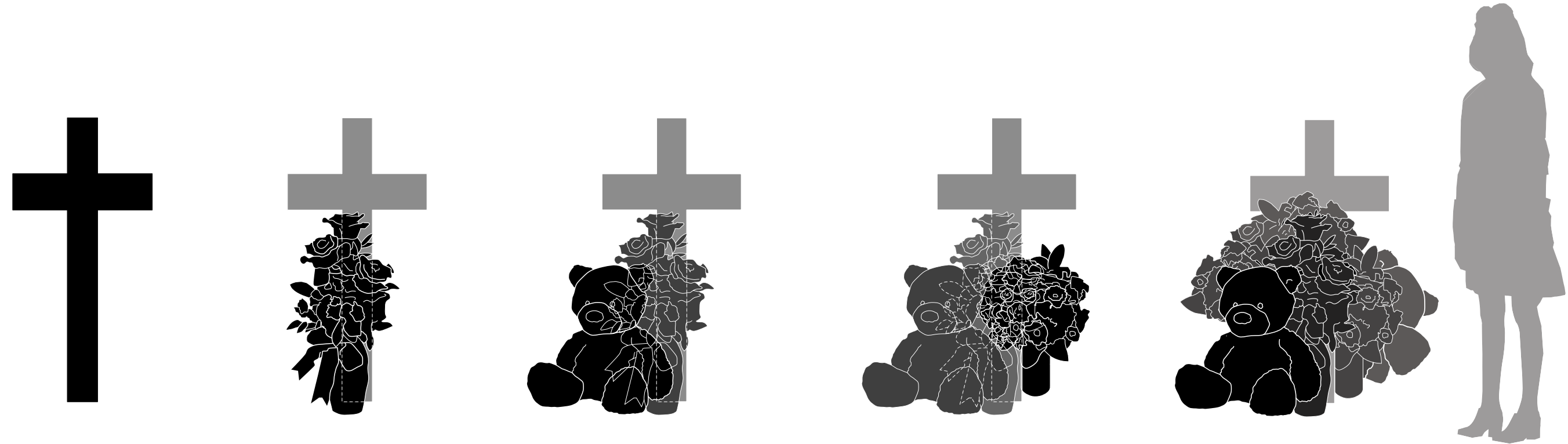


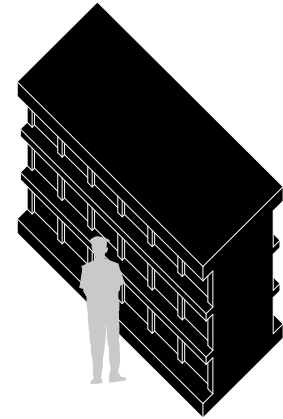
Collecting on the Pole

The other common method for constructing “grassroots” memorials is by appropriating a telephone pole, stop sign, street sign, or any other vertical element that might be found in an urban setting. The first few objects are leaned, or placed against the pole as initial markers. Then, individuals will begin piling additional objects on top of the existing ones until the collection becomes a collective mass. Other objects such as balloons, bags, and signs will often be hung or tied to the pole. The selection of these poles is generally related to location of death, visibility, and ease of access.

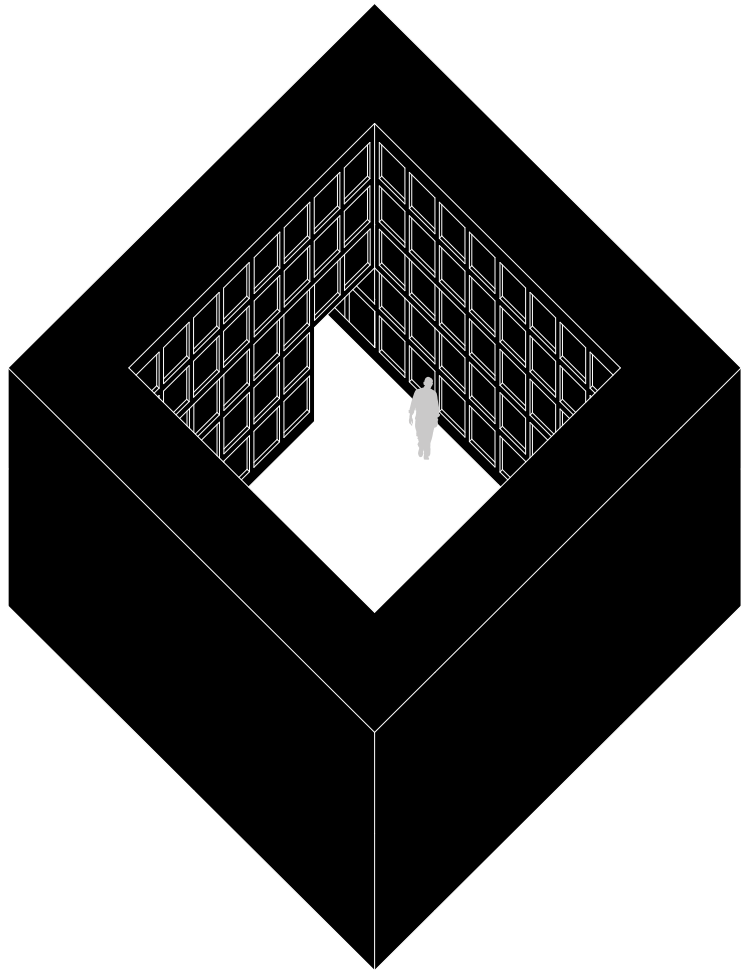
Living Memories: Rethinking Remembrance



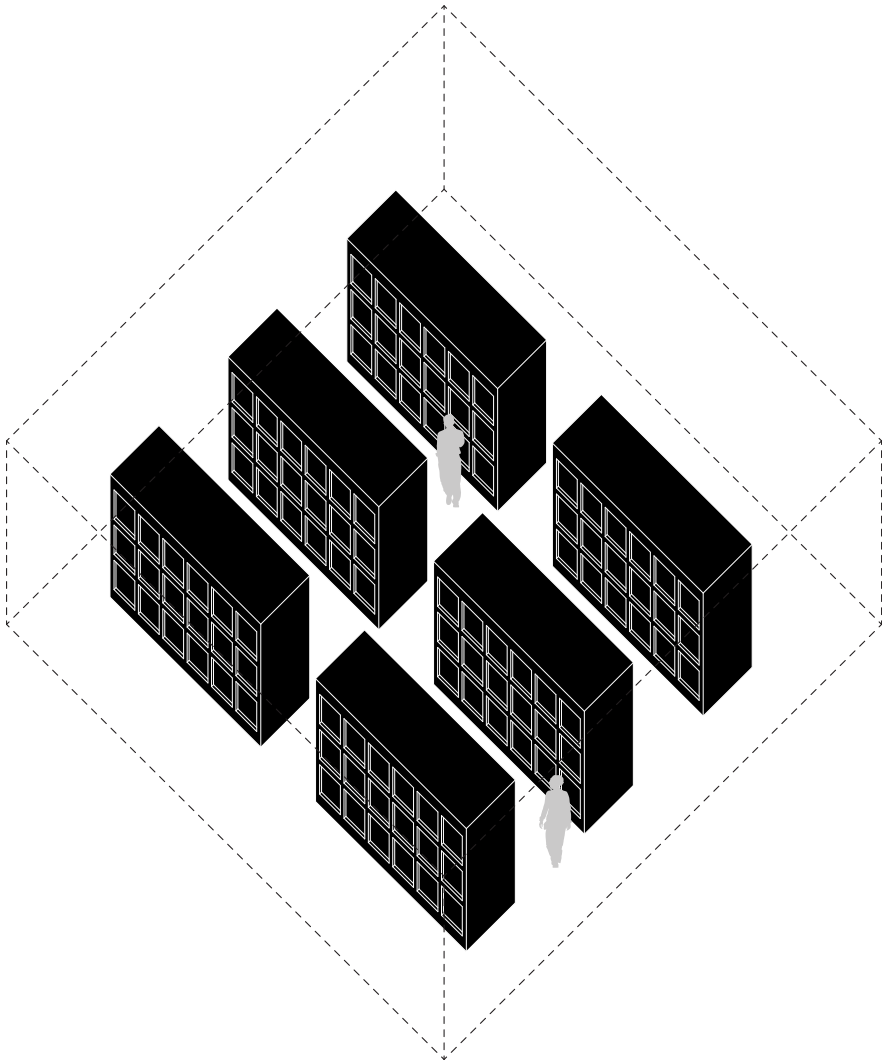




Shelf as Wall



Shelf Defines Space



Shelf Within Space

Interviews

Stephen Marinelli

Date: 10/08/20
Format: Conversation (in person)
Background: Stephen is a close friend of mine, so the tone of the conversation was very personal and relaxed. We discussed the passing of his grandmother in 2017 and his memories of both her and the moment of her passing. My grandfather passed away in 2014 so we discussed different commonalities in emotions, events, and remembrance.
Relation: Most of us have experienced loss, whether it be of a friend, family member, or some other acquaintance. The idea of memorialization is, thus, a universal topic. So I thought it logical to begin my investigation with a close friend or acquaintance to develop a more personal, comfortable discussion on a very specific experience. Most recognized “formal” memorials grapple with collective memory. This investigation deals with the notion of individual memory.

Conversation Notes:

Memories of the phone call: We discussed the moment at which he received the news of his grandmother’s passing. His first impression on recalling that day was that it was rather sudden. It was evident that this stood out from all the rest of his memories of that time due to the shock, as well as the timing. He expressed regret at having been in a poor setting for receiving the phone call from his parents.
Memories of the service: In discussing the service, a few things in particular stood out to him and also to myself. Firstly, the role of flowers in commemorating the deceased is universal. A funeral or memorial would seem bare, cold, strange without the decorative element of flowers. He also remembered being encouraged by the attendance of friends who showed up in support. Their attendance, along with being around other grieving family members helped to remove some of the burden. The action of gathering and sharing these feelings was critical. A detail he recalled is the discussion of burial and the headstone. The family had known that they would bury his grandmother alongside his grandfather but had to decide to

add her name to the existing headstone or erect a new one. The most significant occurrence for him, though, was the performance of music. They played all of her favorite songs as means of eternalizing her interests and personality. He felt most at ease when he played piano, observing that it was his own personal way to contribute and commemorate her. Now, he keeps the laminated funeral prayer card as a memento of this event and of his grandmother—something which he plans to cherish for as long as he can.
Memories of the person: at this point we both shared some of the memories that we treasured most in relation to our grandparents. For Stephen, he recalled trips to his grandmother’s house after church. He remembered certain jokes that she made, specific things that he could do there and nowhere else. But most of all he emphasized certain objects, smells, sounds that became representative of her and her home. Ginger snap cookies and spaghettiios were two particular objects which were specific to memories of his grandmother. Now, whenever he sees, or smells either of them he is immediately reminded of her.



“Unpacking” the conversation:

Among the many recurring themes in our conversation, one of the most prominent was this idea of display/performance in memorialization. The use of flowers for example, as both a decorative and symbolic element, suggest that much of how the memorial operates is in its visual presentation. This also plays into something else that Stephen identified in our conversation—the comfort of gathering and sharing suffering, trauma, sadness. The two illustrate the notion that memorialization and remembrance—although frequently individualized—is a highly public, shared experience. Sabina Tanovic refers to memorials as “performative commemoratives that display death in the heart of social life.” Another condition she observes that relates to our conversation is that there is an “importance of materiality, for example the materiality of the body in burial ceremonies...if there is a material point of reference the bereaved are able to visit, then the process of mourning can be performed in a more defined framework.” In this, she is discussing the materiality of the memorial itself—the idea of an established site, object, experience which can be physically revisited but also the physical manifestations/ associations of memory. In my conversation with Stephen, this is demonstrated in the importance of both the headstone in the burial rite and the various tangible, material objects (mementos, spaghettiios, ginger snaps) which have had new meaning attached to them through remembrance.



From left to right: Oakwood Cemetery Grave, Michael Brown Memorial in Ferguson Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe

Yutaka Sho

Date:	10/14/20
Format:	Zoom call
Background:	In addition to being a professor at Syracuse, Yutaka Sho is a founder and partner at GA Collaborative. GA Collaborative is a non-profit design firm dedicated to providing considered design for those who might lack access to it (most notable is their work in Rwanda). Professor Sho's research includes engagement with Rwandan genocide victims, as well as writing and teaching about trauma related to Hiroshima and Fukushima.
Relation:	The way that we, as architects, consider and approach history is central to all of Professor Sho's work. She thoughtfully approaches all conceptual considerations by grounding them in the memories/ experiences of the individuals and cultures in which her projects are situated. She also teaches a seminar dedicated to studying ways in which architects memorialize as a form of evidence.

Conversation Notes:

What is the importance of memorials?: This was the overarching question we discussed during the interview. What is the importance of memorials? What can architects learn from studying them? Professor Sho first pinpointed her work in Rwanda as the origin of her interest in commemorative architecture. In her engagement with genocide victims, she observed the endless repetition of history, the recurrence of the same mistakes over and over again. However, the attitude of architects towards history is that of “suffering through it”, treating most efforts as reactionary instead of preventative. She saw the potential of “lived history”/ “learned history” in memorials as a way of reconsidering the after the fact (band-aid) nature of architecture. In this way, architects can avoid forgetting the lessons of history and learn from them.

How is this relevant?: Professor Sho emphasized that current events provide a clear indication of how important history and remembrance are to architecture. Certain monuments are being destroyed/ removed/ challenged because they are painfully a-historical, choosing to commemorate negative, warped versions of history. Partially a product of a social system which values the voices of specific individuals and groups,

these monuments are inherently one-sided (as all monuments are). Why else would these problematic individuals be commemorated while indigenous people and minority groups have been clearly ignored? However, the problem is that they previously ignored the history which surrounded them--something people are now challenging. An unanswered question was posed: could a nuanced monument exist?

Experience with victims: Much of Professor Sho's work involves interviews and interactions with victims of traumatic incidents so I asked if she had observed any overlaps or shared themes between them. She immediately noted that they all had a desire to communicate what had happened to them (regardless of the difficulty to articulate it). They wanted everything to be seen, to be heard, to be shared. Trauma consistently manifested itself in a drive “to let you (and everybody) know”. Their attitudes towards methods varied--some wanted to inspire shock and awe, to show violence. Whereas, others preferred to illustrate their experiences in less explicit ways. Yet, all of them--despite the fact that their stories varied wildly and were fragmented, non-linear, or challengingly fixated on strange details--expressed a desire to tell their story.



“Unpacking” the conversation:

The first significant topic of the interview is the idea of understanding/ learning from history. It is tragic when the same mistake is repeatedly as a result of treating the past as a distant event. In reality, the past repeatedly figures into the way that we engage with all aspects of the built environment, creating a synthesis between past-present-future. A more formal example is the work and research of Aldo Rossi. Rossi illustrates the way that type acts as an abstraction of memory--a constant reinterpretation of history--that allows the monument to converse with the city. Thus, if form and image play into the individuals' perception of the monument, the events which they speak to are also significant. So, the treatment of a memorial as evidence, as an emphatic desire to remember (and not to forget) becomes important. We see this clearly in roadside memorials and ghost bikes which serve as a warning of the dangers of negligent driving. We also repeatedly hear the phrase

“never forget” (particularly in 9/11 commemorations). This might factor into why the victims are so motivated to speak about the trauma that they have experienced. In addition to the burden of carrying their personal trauma, the desire to communicate and share their memories spans from a fear of forgetting (as Alain Resnais emphasizes in Hiroshima mon amour). Memorials create a bridge for communication while also offering a space for individuals to reaffirm their emotions, to struggle to make sense of events, and to mourn. One particular example of this is Taryn Simon's “An Occupation of Loss”. In this work, she “makes explicit the never-ending human need to give structure to death in order to understand it... focusing on the performative [and communicative] act of loss rather than its physical manifestation, which has been historically marked by multiple scales – from tombstones to the World Trade Center Memorial”.



From left to right: Memory Void and Shalekhet installation by Menashe Kadishman in the Jewish Museum// Daniel Libeskind, An Occupation of Loss// Taryn Simon, Hiroshima mon amour// Alain Resnais

Timothy Furstnau

Date: 10/28/20
Format: Zoom call

Background: Timothy Furstnau is a writer, artist, and curator whose cross-disciplinary works spans a range of media, genres, and locations. He is co-founder of the collaborative studio FICTILIS which is best known for its curatorial project the Museum of Capitalism. The group's projects vary between installation, exhibition, performance, and social practice

Relation: I was particularly intrigued by the group's emphasis on community engagement and participation--often relying on donations to conceive of their projects. Their Museum of Capitalism project positions itself in a speculative future that anticipates the end of capitalism. The curatorial exercise engages with objects presented by others that might memorialize or recall some aspect of capitalism. Thus, the meaning of the objects displayed is altered by the imagined past-tense.

Conversation Notes:

What was the benefit of using the past tense in the Museum of Capitalism?: The first thing that Tim touched upon was the idea that our relationship with time can defamiliarize certain objects and reveal new attributes that were otherwise unclear. In the case of the Museum of Capitalism, FICTILIS chose to anticipate the end of capitalism so as to look back at the object's displayed in the exhibit as artifacts of a past time. Yet, as we later discussed, this idea is dependent on our attitude and understanding of museums as collectors and exhibitors of objects from the past. Within this project and museums in general, the "meaning" of objects is always in a state of flux. The way that we perceive or remember certain qualities and events related to objects is highly variable and subjective as well.

How does collecting and gathering figure into the group's work?: The idea of collecting is like gathering a body of evidence. Collecting is as much about what is saved as what is disposed of. What might be meaningful for one individual to save might be garbage for another individual. In this way, the object's are material expressions or "retainers" for memory. The way that collecting and memory operate are parallel in this sense. When we remember certain things, we also forget others. At times this can be a subconscious way of

valuing certain events and experiences over other. In addition, these memories are never fully accurate representations of what truly occurred but are subjectively distorted. Objects in a collection behave in the same way. Collecting can also be seen as the development of a language or means of expressing certain thoughts, feelings, issues that otherwise might be challenging to explain. In this sense, they are fundamental in making tangible that which is intangible.

Why does your group emphasize participation?: Here Tim spoke about the importance of collaboration in achieving more expansive goals. The combination of multiple perspectives is fundamental to any great work because it avoids being heavily one-sided. He also made it clear that FICTILIS sees their body of work as "scaffolding" that can support the ideas and input of others. This is why the majority of their projects are deeply rooted in community building and engagement.



“Unpacking” the conversation:

One of the first important topics of discussion was the act of collecting and displaying. That objects in a collection create a language or way of communicating relates very closely to the act of memorializing. Inherent in the display of objects in “grassroots” memorials is the act of visually communicating multiple things: grief, discontent, a warning. But, even more interesting is the question of what is worth collecting. As Tim observed, the collection operates as evidence in a way and is linked to memory and association. This is why when an individual passes, the mourners will cling to certain objects which remind them of the deceased. They can be something small, otherwise valueless but linked to a specific characteristic of that individual or a specific interaction with them. The fact that these meaning are highly subjective makes it extremely difficult to pin down a precise definition of what makes one object more “valuable” or meaningful than another, empha

sizing another important part of our discussion. FICTILIS relies heavily on donation and participation, enabling them to grapple with these highly flexible, subjective issues by drawing on multiple views. They, thus, avoid taking too much liberty in selecting what objects to display in their projects, allowing others to contribute what they believe to be meaningful. It allows them the to engage with a much more diverse viewing audience and gives their body of work a greater validity. It also subverts issues of control in what is stored away in “collective memory” by drawing on multiple subjective memories. In their Museum of Capitalism project, for example, it is mostly up to the contributors to decide how capitalism is “remembered,” what things people think are illustrative of the time period, and what objects are most important and should not be forgotten.



From left to right: Abby Spangel Perry's “Cabinet of Curiosity” in Collections, Artifact Donation for Museum of Capitalism, Summit for Museum of Capitalism

Kevin Grimes

Date: 11/5/20
Format: Zoom call

Background: Kevin Grimes is one of the co-founders of the CMAK Foundation, an organization that dedicated to the remembrance of Chase Kowalski. Chase lost his life during the Sandy Hook tragedy, his family reached out to Kevin (their neighbor) and a few others about establishing a memorial to their son. After a great deal of fundraising, the CMAK Foundation established itself as a positive influence within the community, dedicated not only to remembering Chase but to being fostering healing through various programs.

Relation: Talking with a memorial foundation was one of my first goals in undertaking this assignment. Not only are these groups the typical initiators for the construction of memorials, but they provide a bridge between the mourners, the designers, the builders, the policy makers, and anyone else that might be involved in the process.

Conversation Notes:

The background: In opening the conversation, I asked Kevin to give me a brief overview of his role in the CMAK Foundation and to introduce their goals, interests, and approaches. Chase’s family had approached him and a few other close relations to help establish a memorial foundation for their son. Kevin stated that at first their collective thought was “let’s build something” Chase had been an avid sports fan so they thought it would be appropriate to build a community center. In this way, they could use the memory of a tragedy to help others. However, they soon found that the process of constructing a building was both too expensive and too complicated. At the time, the town was also developing plans for a memorial for the event, but Kevin emphasized that addressing the community directly was challenging due to lingering scars and sensitivity. Eventually, by chance they stumbled on a kid’s triathlon program that was underfunded. Kevin described to me how important sports had been to Chase and how things like his race number or baseball number had become ways of remembering Chase. So, this program was a great opportunity for the group and they immediately undertook fundraising and organizing annual triathlons with the YMCA. He joyfully told me that had COVID not impeded their typical proceedings, this year they would have held 28 programs.

Emphasis on programming and positive remembrance: I asked Kevin to elaborate a bit on the foundation’s attitude towards memorializing Chase and the event that took his life. His immediate response was to avoid any approach that might bring greater sadness or distress to the mourning family. It was far more important for him and CMAK to foster healing through positivity, to remember Chase by influencing and helping others. Instead, they chose to focus less directly on what had happened, engaging it indirectly through Chase’s memory. This is in contrast to the town’s attitude. Kevin tells me, after the event the town was interested in “what should be done” as opposed to how, why, or for who. For Chase’s family, at least, this wasn’t fully sufficient in addressing the loss of their child.

The program: Here, Kevin returned to the program, telling me that it was lucky that they found it and chose not to build a community center. For him, the active engagement with others was far more suitable for prolonging Chase’s memory. He observed that with a community center, they it would have been built in his memory, but wouldn’t actively engage it. Through the program, they are able to facilitate learning and challenge participants. Thus, acts of remembrance are integrated in active participation.



“Unpacking” the conversation:

One interesting point that Kevin made was that New-town, CT’s attitude towards memorializing Sandy Hook was more about “what should be done” Chase’s family in specific seemed to think that this was too vague or was otherwise insufficient in embodying the memory of their son. This reflects that although architects and planners might design memorials that conceptually commemorate loss, the lack of consultation or input of the “mourners” leads to lofty, abstracted products. Kevin’s emphasis on the positive effects of engaged programming (in contrast to initial plans for a community center) further reinforces this notion. Another important idea that came up was the relationship between the memory of the individual and the event. Whereas the CMAK Foundation focuses on commemorating Chase, the memory of his passing is inherently linked to the Sandy Hook tragedy. In this

way, memorializing a single individual tied to an event provides a more manageable, personal, and considerate way to commemorate the event. His emphasis on positivity also reflects the divide between attitudes towards materialization. Whereas some prefer to illustrate tragedy and violence, others choose a more joyful approach to remembrance. In the case of the CMAK Foundation, this allowed them to solidify and prolong Chase’s memory by engaging the present and projecting into the future. Those who want to depict the complete brutality of an event are more interested in bringing the past into present experiences. In both cases, however, the emphasis is placed on active participation and engagement.



Photographs from different events: the marathon and the triathlon.

Dan Krauss

Date: 11/24/20
Format: Zoom call

Background: Dan Krauss is the chairman for the Sandy Hook Permanent Memorial Commission. As such, he played a key role in selecting proposals for a permanent memorial that “remembers, honors, and celebrates those 26 who died as a result of the Sandy Hook Elementary School shooting and serves to provide comfort to those who loved and were touched by them” (quoted from the commission’s website). The group was appointed and assembled in September 2013 and continues to influence the construction of the selected design.

Relation: The consultation of commissions organizations, and foundations related to tragedies is fundamental to the conception of any memorial. The individuals that constitute these groups must play a critical role in the design of the final project as they are the ones for whom it is being constructed.

Conversation Notes:

The background: Dan initiated the conversation by discussing the commission and how it developed following the tragedy. This was incredibly helpful for understanding the ways in which the “call for design” materializes. The town of Newtown observed the necessity for something tangible to provide assistance to those mourning the loss of loved one. So, the Board of Selectman appointed the commission to help select proposals that “seemed most appropriate”. As Dan recalls, the commission spent years developing criteria for the design, meeting monthly to discuss. From here, the group organized a “Design Selection” (Dan emphasized the desire to avoid referring to it as a competition or relying on “celebratory” vocabulary). Prior to the call for design entries, the group sought a site within the borough of Sandy Hook. This was an essential part of the process--the location of choice was selected because of its proximity to the site of the tragedy and for the design potential. The commission received 170 submissions from all over the world and spent several months reviewing them.

The selection process: After narrowing the selection to ten designs, the commission brought the affected families and the general public in to provide feedback. From those ten designs, they then managed to narrow

it down to three and invited the designers to Newtown to present their projects. Following these presentations, the commission selected the final proposal from a group called SWA.

Observations on the submissions: I asked Dan to elaborate a bit on the commissions criteria and to provide examples of the failures and successes of the various designs. The projects which he identified as least successful were those which were politically charged, violent, or explicit. He noted that the group wanted to “remember not recreate”; so designs which referred to the violence of the shooting or the emotional toll on the families of the deceased were “inappropriate”. He also stated that the commission wanted to remember the individuals lost and not the event itself. Other designs that they discarded relied too heavily on abstraction or emphasized the individuals lost. The commission selected the final proposal for its use of a single tree to suggest shared loss and the possibility for comfort through mourning (in the form of growth). The proposal also developed a relationship with the site that fostered healing through interaction with existing lakes and the landscape.



“Unpacking” the conversation:

Something incredibly interesting that Dan touched upon is the desire to memorialize the deceased and not the event itself. Often architects who are tasked with memorializing tragedies that can be politically charged (like this one) get lost in what happened as opposed to who it happened to. As a result, the design becomes a product of an agenda or argument that ignores the importance of the memorial as a material condition to reconcile grief. Thus, what is most important for the memorial is not how it conceptualizes what has occurred but how those who are mourning interact with it. With an event such as this one, this is especially important as the severity of the tragedy makes remembrance especially challenging. It is also notable that Dan criticized certain proposals for being excessively abstract but then commended the final selection which is also slightly abstracted. It

is likely that Dan was referring to proposals that might have been formally abstract (in the same way that Eisenman’s Holocaust Memorial is abstracted). Whereas, the final design was selected because of its experiential potential (how does one interact with the site, move through the project, find comfort?). Thus, the commission foregrounded the interaction of individuals with the project, focusing on how the resolution of grief is actually integrated into the proposal.



The selected design by SWA group. From left to right: site plan, rendering of site pathways, and rendering of the reflecting pool.

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